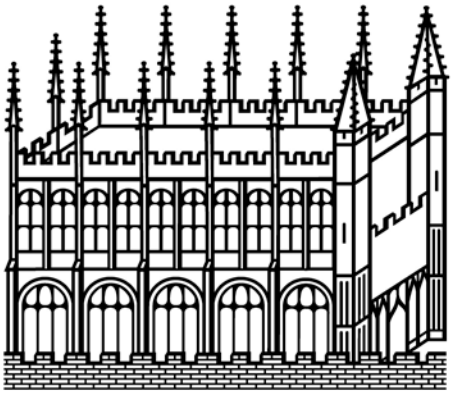

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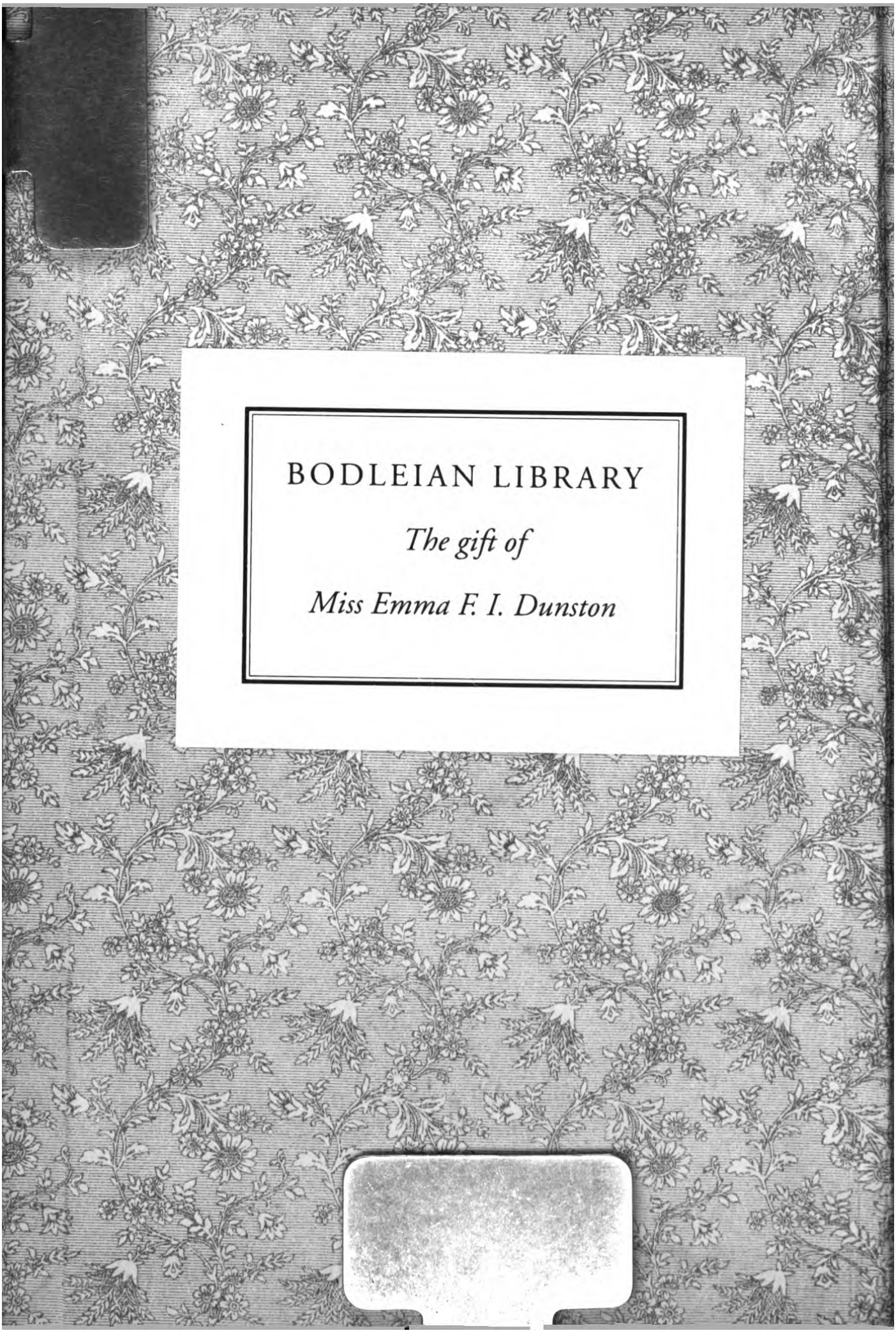
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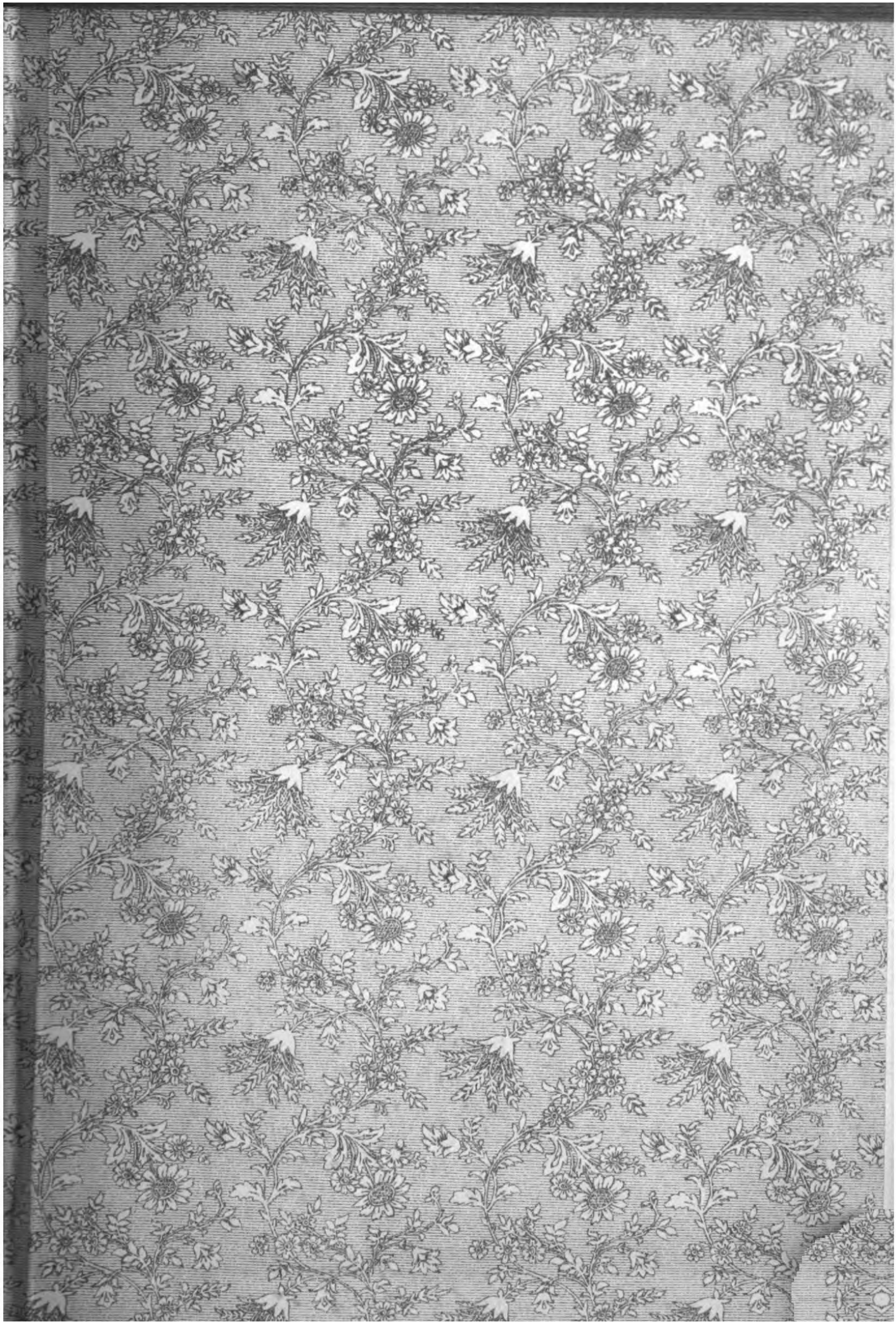

Dunston B 797 b/3

DANIEL DERONDA

Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
That trample o'er the dead to seize their spoil,
Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible
As exhalations laden with slow death,
And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys
Breathes pallid pestilence.

DANIEL DERONDA

BY

GEORGE ELIOT

VOL. II.

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DANIEL DERONDA

BOOK III.

MAIDENS CHOOSING

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

BOOK III.

MAIDENS CHOOSING.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and say, 'Tis all barren;' and so it is: and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruits it offers."—STERNE: *Sentimental Journey.*

To say that Deronda was romantic would be to misrepresent him; but under his calm and somewhat self-repressed exterior there was a fervour which made him easily find poetry and romance among the events of everyday life. And perhaps poetry and romance are as plentiful as ever in the world except for those phlegmatic natures who I suspect would in any age have regarded them as a dull form of erroneous thinking. They exist very easily in the same room with the microscope and

even in railway carriages: what banishes them is the vacuum in gentlemen and lady passengers. How should all the apparatus of heaven and earth, from the farthest firmament to the tender bosom of the mother who nourished us, make poetry for a mind that has no movements of awe and tenderness, no sense of fellowship which thrills from the near to the distant, and back again from the distant to the near?

To Deronda this event of finding Mirah was as heart-stirring as anything that befell Orestes or Rinaldo. He sat up half the night, living again through the moments since he had first discerned Mirah on the river-brink, with the fresh and fresh vividness which belongs to emotive memory. When he took up a book to try and dull this urgency of inward vision, the printed words were no more than a network through which he saw and heard everything as clearly as before—saw not only the actual events of two hours, but possibilities of what had been and what might be which those events were enough to feed with the warm blood of passionate hope and fear. Something in his own experience caused Mirah's search after her mother to lay hold with peculiar force on his imagination. The first prompting of sympathy was to aid her in the search: if given persons were extant in London

there were ways of finding them, as subtle as scientific experiment, the right machinery being set at work. But here the mixed feelings which belonged to Deronda's kindred experience naturally transfused themselves into his anxiety on behalf of Mirah.

The desire to know his own mother, or to know about her, was constantly haunted with dread; and in imagining what might befall Mirah it quickly occurred to him that finding the mother and brother from whom she had been parted when she was a little one might turn out to be a calamity. When she was in the boat she said that her mother and brother were good; but the goodness might have been chiefly in her own ignorant innocence and yearning memory, and the ten or twelve years since the parting had been time enough for much worsening. Spite of his strong tendency to side with the objects of prejudice, and in general with those who got the worst of it, his interest had never been practically drawn towards existing Jews, and the facts he knew about them, whether they walked conspicuous in fine apparel or lurked in by-streets, were chiefly of the sort most repugnant to him. Of learned and accomplished Jews he took it for granted that they had dropped their religion, and

wished to be merged in the people of their native lands. Scorn flung at a Jew as such would have roused all his sympathy in griefs of inheritance; but the indiscriminate scorn of a race will often strike a specimen who has well earned it on his own account, and might fairly be gibbeted as a rascally son of Adam. It appears that the Caribs, who know little of theology, regard thieving as a practice peculiarly connected with Christian tenets, and probably they could allege experimental grounds for this opinion. Deronda could not escape (who can?) knowing ugly stories of Jewish characteristics and occupations; and though one of his favourite protests was against the severance of past and present history, he was like others who shared his protest, in never having cared to reach any more special conclusions about actual Jews than that they retained the virtues and vices of a long-oppressed race. But now that Mirah's longing roused his mind to a closer survey of details, very disagreeable images urged themselves of what it might be to find out this middle-aged Jewess and her son. To be sure, there was the exquisite refinement and charm of the creature herself to make a presumption in favour of her immediate kindred, but—he must wait to know more: perhaps through Mrs Meyrick he might

gather some guiding hints from Mirah's own lips. Her voice, her accent, her looks—all the sweet purity that clothed her as with a consecrating garment made him shrink the more from giving her, either ideally or practically, an association with what was hateful or contaminating. But these fine words with which we fumigate and becloud unpleasant facts are not the language in which we think. Deronda's thinking went on in rapid images of what might be: he saw himself guided by some official scout into a dingy street; he entered through a dim doorway, and saw a hawk-eyed woman, rough-headed, and unwashed, cheapening a hungry girl's last bit of finery; or in some quarter only the more hideous for being smarter, he found himself under the breath of a young Jew talkative and familiar, willing to show his acquaintance with gentlemen's tastes, and not fastidious in any transactions with which they would favour him—and so on through the brief chapter of his experience in this kind. Excuse him: his mind was not apt to run spontaneously into insulting ideas, or to practise a form of wit which identifies Moses with the advertisement sheet; but he was just now governed by dread, and if Mirah's parents had been Christian, the chief difference would have been that his forebod-

ings would have been fed with wider knowledge. It was the habit of his mind to connect dread with unknown parentage, and in this case as well as his own there was enough to make the connection reasonable.

But what was to be done with Mirah? She needed shelter and protection in the fullest sense, and all his chivalrous sentiment roused itself to insist that the sooner and the more fully he could engage for her the interest of others besides himself, the better he should fulfil her claims on him. He had no right to provide for her entirely, though he might be able to do so; the very depth of the impression she had produced made him desire that she should understand herself to be entirely independent of him; and vague visions of the future which he tried to dispel as fantastic left their influence in an anxiety, stronger than any motive he could give for it, that those who saw his actions closely should be acquainted from the first with the history of his relation to Mirah. He had learned to hate secrecy about the grand ties and obligations of his life — to hate it the more because a strong spell of interwoven sensibilities hindered him from breaking such secrecy. Deronda had made a vow to himself that—since the truths which disgrace mortals are not all of

their own making — the truth should never be made a disgrace to another by his act. He was not without terror lest he should break this vow, and fall into the apologetic philosophy which explains the world into containing nothing better than one's own conduct.

At one moment he resolved to tell the whole of his adventure to Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger the next morning at breakfast, but the possibility that something quite new might reveal itself on his next visit to Mrs Meyrick's checked this impulse, and he finally went to sleep on the conclusion that he would wait until that visit had been made.

CHAPTER XX.

"It will hardly be denied that even in this frail and corrupted world, we sometimes meet persons who, in their very mien and aspect, as well as in the whole habit of life, manifest such a signature and stamp of virtue, as to make our judgment of them a matter of intuition rather than the result of continued examination."—ALEXANDER KNOX: quoted in Southey's Life of Wesley.

MIRAH said that she had slept well that night; and when she came down in Mab's black dress, her dark hair curling in fresh fibrils as it gradually dried from its plenteous bath, she looked like one who was beginning to take comfort after the long sorrow and watching which had paled her cheek and made deep blue semicircles under her eyes. It was Mab who carried her breakfast and ushered her down—with some pride in the effect produced by a pair of tiny felt slippers which she had rushed out to buy because there were no shoes in the house small enough for Mirah, whose borrowed dress ceased about her ankles and displayed the cheap clothing that moulding itself on her feet seemed an adornment as choice as the

sheaths of buds. The farthing buckles were bijoux.

"Oh, if you please, mamma!" cried Mab, clasping her hands and stooping towards Mirah's feet, as she entered the parlour. "Look at the slippers, how beautifully they fit! I declare she is like the Queen Budoor—'two delicate feet, the work of the protecting and all-recompensing Creator, support her; and I wonder how they can sustain what is above them.'"

Mirah looked down at her own feet in a child-like way and then smiled at Mrs Meyrick, who was saying inwardly, "One could hardly imagine this creature having an evil thought. But wise people would tell me to be cautious." She returned Mirah's smile and said, "I fear the feet have had to sustain their burthen a little too often lately. But to-day she will rest and be my companion."

"And she will tell you so many things and I shall not hear them," grumbled Mab, who felt herself in the first volume of a delightful romance and obliged to miss some chapters because she had to go to pupils.

Kate was already gone to make sketches along the river, and Amy was away on business errands. It was what the mother wished, to be alone with

this stranger, whose story must be a sorrowful one, yet was needful to be told.

The small front parlour was as good as a temple that morning. The sunlight was on the river and soft air came in through the open window; the walls showed a glorious silent cloud of witnesses —the Virgin soaring amid her cherubic escort; grand Melancholia with her solemn universe; the Prophets and Sibyls; the School of Athens; the Last Supper; mystic groups where far-off ages made one moment; grave Holbein and Rembrandt heads; the Tragic Muse; last-century children at their musings or their play; Italian poets—all were there through the medium of a little black and white. The neat mother who had weathered her troubles, and come out of them with a face still cheerful, was sorting coloured wools for her embroidery. Hafiz purred on the window-ledge, the clock on the mantelpiece ticked without hurry, and the occasional sound of wheels seemed to lie outside the more massive central quiet. Mrs Meyrick thought that this quiet might be the best invitation to speech on the part of her companion, and chose not to disturb it by remark. Mirah sat opposite in her former attitude, her hands clasped on her lap, her ankles crossed, her eyes at first travelling slowly over the objects around her,

but finally resting with a sort of placid reverence on Mrs Meyrick. At length she began to speak softly.

"I remember my mother's face better than anything; yet I was not seven when I was taken away, and I am nineteen now."

"I can understand that," said Mrs Meyrick. "There are some earliest things that last the longest."

"Oh yes, it was the earliest. I think my life began with waking up and loving my mother's face: it was so near to me, and her arms were round me, and she sang to me. One hymn she sang so often, so often: and then she taught me to sing it with her: it was the first I ever sang. They were always Hebrew hymns she sang; and because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of nothing but our love and happiness. When I lay in my little bed and it was all white above me, she used to bend over me between me and the white, and sing in a sweet low voice. I can dream myself back into that time when I am awake, and often it comes back to me in my sleep—my hand is very little, I put it up to her face and she kisses it. Sometimes in my dream I begin to tremble and think that we are both dead; but then I wake up and my hand

lies like this, and for a moment I hardly know myself. But if I could see my mother again, I should know her."

"You must expect some change after twelve years," said Mrs Meyrick, gently. "See my grey hair: ten years ago it was bright brown. The days and the months pace over us like restless little birds, and leave the marks of their feet backwards and forwards; especially when they are like birds with heavy hearts—then they tread heavily."

"Ah, I am sure her heart has been heavy for want of me. But to feel her joy if we could meet again, and I could make her know how I love her and give her deep comfort after all her mourning! If that could be, I should mind nothing; I should be glad that I have lived through my trouble. I did despair. The world seemed miserable and wicked; none helped me so that I could bear their looks and words; I felt that my mother was dead, and death was the only way to her. But then in the last moment—yesterday, when I longed for the water to close over me—and I thought that death was the best image of mercy—then goodness came to me living, and I felt trust in the living. And—it is strange—but I began to hope that she was living too. And now

I am with you—here—this morning, peace and hope have come into me like a flood. I want nothing; I can wait; because I hope and believe and am grateful—oh, so grateful! You have not thought evil of me—you have not despised me."

Mirah spoke with low-toned fervour, and sat as still as a picture all the while.

"Many others would have felt as we do, my dear," said Mrs Meyrick, feeling a mist come over her eyes as she looked at her work.

"But I did not meet them—they did not come to me."

"How was it that you were taken from your mother?"

"Ah, I am a long while coming to that. It is dreadful to speak of, yet I must tell you—I must tell you everything. My father—it was he who took me away. I thought we were only going on a little journey; and I was pleased. There was a box with all my little things in. But we went on board a ship, and got farther and farther away from the land. Then I was ill; and I thought it would never end—it was the first misery, and it seemed endless. But at last we landed. I knew nothing then, and believed what my father said. He comforted me, and told me I should go back to my mother. But it was America we had

reached, and it was long years before we came back to Europe. At first I often asked my father when we were going back; and I tried to learn writing fast, because I wanted to write to my mother; but one day when he found me trying to write a letter, he took me on his knee and told me that my mother and brother were dead; that was why we did not go back. I remember my brother a little; he carried me once; but he was not always at home. I believed my father when he said that they were dead. I saw them under the earth when he said they were there, with their eyes for ever closed. I never thought of its not being true; and I used to cry every night in my bed for a long while. Then when she came so often to me, in my sleep, I thought she must be living about me though I could not always see her, and that comforted me. I was never afraid in the dark, because of that; and very often in the day I used to shut my eyes and bury my face and try to see her and to hear her singing. I came to do that at last without shutting my eyes."

Mirah paused with a sweet content in her face, as if she were having her happy vision, while she looked out towards the river.

"Still your father was not unkind to you, I

hope," said Mrs Meyrick, after a minute, anxious to recall her.

"No; he petted me, and took pains to teach me. He was an actor; and I found out, after, that the 'Coburg' I used to hear of his going to at home was a theatre. But he had more to do with the theatre than acting. He had not always been an actor; he had been a teacher, and knew many languages. His acting was not very good, I think; but he managed the stage, and wrote and translated plays. An Italian lady, a singer, lived with us a long time. They both taught me; and I had a master besides, who made me learn by heart and recite. I worked quite hard, though I was so little; and I was not nine when I first went on the stage. I could easily learn things, and I was not afraid. But then and ever since I hated our way of life. My father had money, and we had finery about us in a disorderly way; always there were men and women coming and going, there was loud laughing and disputing, strutting, snapping of fingers, jeering, faces I did not like to look at—though many petted and caressed me. But then I remembered my mother. Even at first when I understood nothing, I shrank away from all those things outside me into companionship with thoughts that were not like

them; and I gathered thoughts very fast, because I read many things—plays and poetry, Shakespeare and Schiller, and learned evil and good. My father began to believe that I might be a great singer: my voice was considered wonderful for a child; and he had the best teaching for me. But it was painful that he boasted of me, and set me to sing for show at any minute, as if I had been a musical box. Once when I was ten years old, I played the part of a little girl who had been forsaken and did not know it, and sat singing to herself while she played with flowers. I did it without any trouble; but the clapping and all the sounds of the theatre were hateful to me; and I never liked the praise I had, because it seemed all very hard and unloving: I missed the love and the trust I had been born into. I made a life in my own thoughts quite different from everything about me: I chose what seemed to me beautiful out of the plays and everything, and made my world out of it; and it was like a sharp knife always grazing me that we had two sorts of life which jarred so with each other—women looking good and gentle on the stage, and saying good things as if they felt them, and directly after I saw them with coarse, ugly manners. My father sometimes noticed my shrinking ways; and Signora

said one day when I had been rehearsing, 'She will never be an artist: she has no notion of being anybody but herself. That does very well now, but by-and-by you will see—she will have no more face and action than a singing-bird.' My father was angry, and they quarrelled. I sat alone and cried, because what she had said was like a long unhappy future unrolled before me. I did not want to be an artist; but this was what my father expected of me. After a while Signora left us, and a governess used to come and give me lessons in different things, because my father began to be afraid of my singing too much; but I still acted from time to time. Rebellious feelings grew stronger in me, and I wished to get away from this life; but I could not tell where to go, and I dreaded the world. Besides, I felt it would be wrong to leave my father: I dreaded doing wrong, for I thought I might get wicked and hateful to myself, in the same way that many others seemed hateful to me. For so long, so long I had never felt my outside world happy; and if I got wicked I should lose my world of happy thoughts where my mother lived with me. That was my childish notion all through those years. Oh how long they were!"

Mirah fell to musing again.

"Had you no teaching about what was your

duty?" said Mrs Meyrick. She did not like to say 'religion'—finding herself on inspection rather dim as to what the Hebrew religion might have turned into at this date.

"No—only that I ought to do what my father wished. He did not follow our religion at New York, and I think he wanted me not to know much about it. But because my mother used to take me to the synagogue, and I remembered sitting on her knee and looking through the railing and hearing the chanting and singing, I longed to go. One day when I was quite small I slipped out and tried to find the synagogue, but I lost myself a long while till a pedlar questioned me and took me home. My father, missing me, had been in much fear, and was very angry. I too had been so frightened at losing myself that it was long before I thought of venturing out again. But after Signora left us we went to rooms where our landlady was a Jewess and observed her religion. I asked her to take me with her to the synagogue; and I read in her prayer-books and Bible, and when I had money enough I asked her to buy me books of my own, for these books seemed a closer companionship with my mother: I knew that she must have looked at the very words and said them. In that way I have come to know a little

of our religion, and the history of our people, besides piecing together what I read in plays and other books about Jews and Jewesses; because I was sure that my mother obeyed her religion. I had left off asking my father about her. It is very dreadful to say it, but I began to disbelieve him. I had found that he did not always tell the truth, and made promises without meaning to keep them; and that raised my suspicion that my mother and brother were still alive though he had told me that they were dead. For in going over the past again and again as I got older and knew more, I felt sure that my mother had been deceived, and had expected to see us back again after a very little while; and my father's taking me on his knee and telling me that my mother and brother were both dead seemed to me now nothing but a bit of acting, to set my mind at rest. The cruelty of that falsehood sank into me, and I hated all untruth because of it. I wrote to my mother secretly: I knew the street, Colman Street, where we lived, and that it was near Blackfriars Bridge and the Coburg, and that our name was Cohen then, though my father called us Lapidoth, because, he said, it was a name of his forefathers in Poland. I sent my letter secretly; but no answer came, and I thought there was no hope for me.

Our life in America did not last much longer. My father suddenly told me we were to pack up and go to Hamburg, and I was rather glad. I hoped we might get among a different sort of people, and I knew German quite well—some German plays almost all by heart. My father spoke it better than he spoke English. I was thirteen then, and I seemed to myself quite old—I knew so much, and yet so little. I think other children cannot feel as I did. I had often wished that I had been drowned when I was going away from my mother. But I set myself to obey and suffer: what else could I do? One day when we were on our voyage, a new thought came into my mind. I was not very ill that time, and I kept on deck a good deal. My father acted and sang and joked to amuse people on board, and I used often to overhear remarks about him. One day, when I was looking at the sea and nobody took notice of me, I overheard a gentleman say, 'Oh, he is one of those clever Jews—a rascal, I shouldn't wonder. There's no race like them for cunning in the men and beauty in the women. I wonder what market he means that daughter for.' When I heard this, it darted into my mind that the unhappiness in my life came from my being a Jewess, and that always, to the end the world would think slightly of me

and that I must bear it, for I should be judged by that name; and it comforted me to believe that my suffering was part of the affliction of my people, my part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through ages and ages. For if many of our race were wicked and made merry in their wickedness—what was that but part of the affliction borne by the just among them, who were despised for the sins of their brethren?—But you have not rejected me."

Mirah had changed her tone in this last sentence, having suddenly reflected that at this moment she had reason not for complaint but for gratitude.

"And we will try to save you from being judged unjustly by others, my poor child," said Mrs Meyrick, who had now given up all attempt at going on with her work, and sat listening with folded hands and a face hardly less eager than Mab's would have been. "Go on, go on: tell me all."

"After that we lived in different towns—Hamburg and Vienna, the longest. I began to study singing again, and my father always got money about the theatres. I think he brought a good deal of money from America: I never knew why we left. For some time he was in great spirits about my singing, and he made me rehearse parts

and act continually. He looked forward to my coming out in the opera. But by-and-by it seemed that my voice would never be strong enough—it did not fulfil its promise. My master at Vienna said, 'Don't strain it further: it will never do for the public:—it is gold, but a thread of gold dust.' My father was bitterly disappointed: we were not so well off at that time. I think I have not quite told you what I felt about my father. I knew he was fond of me and meant to indulge me, and that made me afraid of hurting him; but he always mistook what would please me and give me happiness. It was his nature to take everything lightly; and I soon left off asking him any question about things that I cared for much, because he always turned them off with a joke. He would even ridicule our own people; and once when he had been imitating their movements and their tones in praying, only to make others laugh, I could not restrain myself—for I always had an anger in my heart about my mother—and when we were alone, I said, 'Father, you ought not to mimic our own people before Christians who mock them: would it not be bad if I mimicked you, that they might mock you?' But he only shrugged his shoulders and laughed and pinched my chin, and said, 'You couldn't do it, my dear.' It was this way of turn-

ing off everything, that made a great wall between me and my father, and whatever I felt most I took the most care to hide from him. For there were some things — when they were laughed at I could not bear it: the world seemed like a hell to me. Is this world and all the life upon it only like a farce or a vaudeville, where you find no great meanings? Why then are there tragedies and grand operas, where men do difficult things and choose to suffer? I think it is silly to speak of all things as a joke. And I saw that his wishing me to sing the greatest music, and parts in grand operas, was only wishing for what would fetch the greatest price. That hemmed in my gratitude for his affectionateness, and the tenderest feeling I had towards him was pity. Yes, I did sometimes pity him. He had aged and changed. Now he was no longer so lively. I thought he seemed worse—less good to others and to me. Every now and then in the latter years his gaiety went away suddenly, and he would sit at home silent and gloomy; or he would come in and fling himself down and sob, just as I have done myself when I have been in trouble. If I put my hand on his knee and said, 'What is the matter, father?' he would make no answer, but would draw my arm round his neck and put his arm round me, and go on crying.

There never came any confidence between us; but oh, I was sorry for him. At those moments I knew he must feel his life bitter, and I pressed my cheek against his head and prayed. Those moments were what most bound me to him; and I used to think how much my mother once loved him, else she would not have married him.

"But soon there came the dreadful time. We had been at Pesth and we came back to Vienna. In spite of what my master Leo had said, my father got me an engagement, not at the opera, but to take singing parts at a suburb theatre in Vienna. He had nothing to do with the theatre then; I did not understand what he did, but I think he was continually at a gambling-house, though he was careful always about taking me to the theatre. I was very miserable. The plays I acted in were detestable to me. Men came about us and wanted to talk to me: women and men seemed to look at me with a sneering smile: it was no better than a fiery furnace. Perhaps I make it worse than it was—you don't know that life; but the glare and the faces, and my having to go on and act and sing what I hated, and then see people who came to stare at me behind the scenes—it was all so much worse than when I was a little girl. I went through with it; I did it; I

had set my mind to obey my father and work, for I saw nothing better that I could do. But I felt that my voice was getting weaker, and I knew that my acting was not good except when it was not really acting, but the part was one that I could be myself in, and some feeling within me carried me along. That was seldom.

"Then in the midst of all this, the news came to me one morning that my father had been taken to prison, and he had sent for me. He did not tell me the reason why he was there, but he ordered me to go to an address he gave me, to see a Count who would be able to get him released The address was to some public rooms where I was to ask for the Count, and beg him to come to my father. I found him, and recognised him as a gentleman whom I had seen the other night for the first time behind the scenes. That agitated me, for I remembered his way of looking at me and kissing my hand—I thought it was in mockery. But I delivered my errand and he promised to go immediately to my father, who came home again that very evening, bringing the Count with him. I now began to feel a horrible dread of this man, for he worried me with his attentions, his eyes were always on me: I felt sure that whatever else there might be in his mind towards me, below it all

there was scorn for the Jewess and the actress. And when he came to me the next day in the theatre and would put my shawl round me, a terror took hold of me; I saw that my father wanted me to look pleased. The Count was neither very young nor very old: his hair and eyes were pale; he was tall and walked heavily, and his face was heavy and grave except when he looked at me. He smiled at me, and his smile went through me with horror: I could not tell why he was so much worse to me than other men. Some feelings are like our hearing: they come as sounds do, before we know their reason. My father talked to me about him when we were alone, and praised him —said what a good friend he had been. I said nothing, because I supposed he had got my father out of prison. When the Count came again, my father left the room. He asked me if I liked being on the stage. I said No, I only acted in obedience to my father. He always spoke French, and called me 'petit ange' and such things, which I felt insulting. I knew he meant to make love to me, and I had it firmly in my mind that a nobleman and one who was not a Jew could have no love for me that was not half contempt. But then he told me that I need not act any longer; he wished me to visit him at his

beautiful place, where I might be queen of everything. It was difficult to me to speak, I felt so shaken with anger: I could only say, 'I would rather stay on the stage for ever,' and I left him there. Hurrying out of the room I saw my father sauntering in the passage. My heart was crushed. I went past him and locked myself up. It had sunk into me that my father was in a conspiracy with that man against me. But the next day he persuaded me to come out: he said that I had mistaken everything, and he would explain: if I did not come out and act and fulfil my engagement, we should be ruined and he must starve. So I went on acting, and for a week or more the Count never came near me. My father changed our lodgings, and kept at home except when he went to the theatre with me. He began one day to speak discouragingly of my acting, and say I could never go on singing in public—I should lose my voice—I ought to think of my future, and not put my nonsensical feelings between me and my fortune. He said, 'What will you do? You will be brought down to sing and beg at people's doors. You have had a splendid offer and ought to accept it.' I could not speak: a horror took possession of me when I thought of my mother and of him. I felt for the first time that I should

not do wrong to leave him. But the next day he told me that he had put an end to my engagement at the theatre, and that we were to go to Prague. I was getting suspicious of everything, and my will was hardening to act against him. It took us two days to pack and get ready; and I had it in my mind that I might be obliged to run away from my father, and then I would come to London and try if it were possible to find my mother. I had a little money, and I sold some things to get more. I packed a few clothes in a little bag that I could carry with me, and I kept my mind on the watch. My father's silence—his letting drop that subject of the Count's offer—made me feel sure that there was a plan against me. I felt as if it had been a plan to take me to a madhouse. I once saw a picture of a madhouse, that I could never forget; it seemed to me very much like some of the life I had seen—the people strutting, quarrelling, leering—the faces with cunning and malice in them. It was my will to keep myself from wickedness; and I prayed for help. I had seen what despised women were: and my heart turned against my father, for I saw always behind him that man who made me shudder. You will think I had not enough reason for my suspicions, and perhaps I had not, outside my

own feeling; but it seemed to me that my mind had been lit up, and all that might be stood out clear and sharp. If I slept, it was only to see the same sort of things, and I could hardly sleep at all. Through our journey I was everywhere on the watch. I don't know why, but it came before me like a real event, that my father would suddenly leave me and I should find myself with the Count where I could not get away from him. I thought God was warning me: my mother's voice was in my soul. It was dark when we reached Prague, and though the strange bunches of lamps were lit it was difficult to distinguish faces as we drove along the street. My father chose to sit outside—he was always smoking now—and I watched everything in spite of the darkness. I do believe I could see better then than ever I did before: the strange clearness within seemed to have got outside me. It was not my habit to notice faces and figures much in the street; but this night I saw every one; and when we passed before a great hotel I caught sight only of a back that was passing in—the light of the great bunch of lamps a good way off fell on it. I knew it—before the face was turned, as it fell into shadow, I knew who it was. Help came to me. I feel sure help came to me. I did not sleep that night. I put on my plainest

things—the cloak and hat I have worn ever since; and I sat watching for the light and the sound of the doors being unbarred. Some one rose early —at four o'clock, to go to the railway. That gave me courage. I slipped out with my little bag under my cloak, and none noticed me. I had been a long while attending to the railway guide that I might learn the way to England; and before the sun had risen I was in the train for Dresden. Then I cried for joy. I did not know whether my money would last out, but I trusted. I could sell the things in my bag, and the little rings in my ears, and I could live on bread only. My only terror was lest my father should follow me. But I never paused. I came on, and on, and on, only eating bread now and then. When I got to Brussels I saw that I should not have enough money, and I sold all that I could sell; but here a strange thing happened. Putting my hand into the pocket of my cloak, I found a half-napoleon. Wondering and wondering how it came there, I remembered that on the way from Cologne there was a young workman sitting against me. I was frightened at every one, and did not like to be spoken to. At first he tried to talk, but when he saw that I did not like it, he left off. It was a long journey; I ate nothing but a bit of bread,

and he once offered me some of the food he brought in, but I refused it. I do believe it was he who put that bit of gold in my pocket. Without it I could hardly have got to Dover, and I did walk a good deal of the way from Dover to London. I knew I should look like a miserable beggar-girl. I wanted not to look very miserable, because if I found my mother it would grieve her to see me so. But oh, how vain my hope was that she would be there to see me come! As soon as I set foot in London, I began to ask for Lambeth and Blackfriars Bridge, but they were a long way off, and I went wrong. At last I got to Blackfriars Bridge and asked for Colman Street. People shook their heads. None knew it. I saw it in my mind — our doorsteps, and the white tiles hung in the windows, and the large brick building opposite with wide doors. But there was nothing like it. At last when I asked a tradesman where the Coburg Theatre and Colman Street were, he said, 'Oh, my little woman, that's all done away with. The old streets have been pulled down; everything is new.' I turned away, and felt as if death had laid a hand on me. He said: 'Stop, stop! young woman; what is it you're wanting with Colman Street, eh?' meaning well, perhaps. But his

tone was what I could not bear; and how could I tell him what I wanted? I felt blinded and bewildered with a sudden shock. I suddenly felt that I was very weak and weary, and yet where could I go? for I looked so poor and dusty, and had nothing with me—I looked like a street-beggar. And I was afraid of all places where I could enter. I lost my trust. I thought I was forsaken. It seemed that I had been in a fever of hope—delirious—all the way from Prague: I thought that I was helped, and I did nothing but strain my mind forward and think of finding my mother; and now—there I stood in a strange world. All who saw me would think ill of me, and I must herd with beggars. I stood on the bridge and looked along the river. People were going on to a steamboat. Many of them seemed poor, and I felt as if it would be a refuge to get away from the streets: perhaps the boat would take me where I could soon get into a solitude. I had still some pence left, and I bought a loaf when I went on the boat. I wanted to have a little time and strength to think of life and death. How could I live? And now again it seemed that if ever I were to find my mother again, death was the way to her. I ate, that I might have strength to think. The boat set me down at a place along the river

—I don't know where—and it was late in the evening. I found some large trees apart from the road and I sat down under them that I might rest through the night. Sleep must have soon come to me, and when I awoke it was morning. The birds were singing, the dew was white about me, I felt chill and oh so lonely! I got up and walked and followed the river a long way and then turned back again. There was no reason why I should go anywhere. The world about me seemed like a vision that was hurrying by while I stood still with my pain. My thoughts were stronger than I was: they rushed in and forced me to see all my life from the beginning; ever since I was carried away from my mother I had felt myself a lost child taken up and used by strangers, who did not care what my life was to me, but only what I could do for them. It seemed all a weary wandering and heart-loneliness—as if I had been forced to go to merry-makings without the expectation of joy. And now it was worse. I was lost again, and I dreaded lest any stranger should notice me and speak to me. I had a terror of the world. None knew me; all would mistake me. I had seen so many in my life who made themselves glad with scorning, and laughed at another's shame. What could I do? This life seemed to be closing

in upon me with a wall of fire—everywhere there was scorching that made me shrink. The high sunlight made me shrink. And I began to think that my despair was the voice of God telling me to die. But it would take me long to die of hunger. Then I thought of my People, how they had been driven from land to land and been afflicted, and multitudes had died of misery in their wandering—was I the first? And in the wars and troubles when Christians were cruelest, our fathers had sometimes slain their children and afterwards themselves; it was to save them from being false apostates. That seemed to make it right for me to put an end to my life; for calamity had closed me in too, and I saw no pathway but to evil. But my mind got into war with itself, for there were contrary things in it. I knew that some had held it wrong to hasten their own death, though they were in the midst of flames; and while I had some strength left, it was a longing to bear if I ought to bear—else where was the good of all my life? It had not been happy since the first years: when the light came every morning I used to think, 'I will bear it.' But always before, I had some hope; now it was gone. With these thoughts I wandered and wandered, inwardly crying to the Most High, from whom I

should not flee in death more than in life—though I had no strong faith that He cared for me. The strength seemed departing from my soul: deep below all my cries was the feeling that I was alone and forsaken. The more I thought, the wearier I got, till it seemed I was not thinking at all, but only the sky and the river and the Eternal God were in my soul. And what was it whether I died or lived? If I lay down to die in the river, was it more than lying down to sleep?—for there too I committed my soul—I gave myself up. I could not hear memories any more: I could only feel what was present in me—it was all one longing to cease from my weary life, which seemed only a pain outside the great peace that I might enter into. That was how it was. When the evening came and the sun was gone, it seemed as if that was all I had to wait for. And a new strength came into me to will what I would do. You know what I did. I was going to die. You know what happened—did he not tell you? Faith came to me again: I was not forsaken. He told you how he found me?"

Mrs Meyrick gave no audible answer, but pressed her lips against Mirah's forehead.

"She's just a pearl: the mud has only washed

her," was the fervid little woman's closing commentary when, *tête-à-tête* with Deronda in the back parlour that evening, she had conveyed Mirah's story to him with much vividness.

"What is your feeling about a search for this mother?" said Deronda. "Have you no fears? I have, I confess."

"Oh, I believe the mother's good," said Mrs Meyrick, with rapid decisiveness. "Or *was* good. She may be dead—that's my fear. A good woman, you may depend: you may know it by the scoundrel the father is. Where did the child get her goodness from? Wheaten flour has to be accounted for."

Deronda was rather disappointed at this answer: he had wanted a confirmation of his own judgment, and he began to put in demurrers. The argument about the mother would not apply to the brother; and Mrs Meyrick admitted that the brother might be an ugly likeness of the father. Then, as to advertising, if the name was Cohen, you might as well advertise for two undescribed terriers: and here Mrs Meyrick helped him, for the idea of an advertisement, already mentioned to Mirah, had roused the poor child's terror: she was convinced that her father would see it—he saw everything in the papers. Certainly there

were safer means than advertising: men might be set to work whose business it was to find missing persons; but Deronda wished Mrs Meyrick to feel with him that it would be wiser to wait, before seeking a dubious—perhaps a deplorable result; especially as he was engaged to go abroad the next week for a couple of months. If a search were made, he would like to be at hand, so that Mrs Meyrick might not be unaided in meeting any consequences—supposing that she would generously continue to watch over Mirah.

"We should be very jealous of any one who took the task from us," said Mrs Meyrick. "She will stay under my roof: there is Hans's old room for her."

"Will she be content to wait?" said Deronda, anxiously.

"No trouble there! It is not her nature to run into planning and devising; only to submit. See how she submitted to that father. It was a wonder to herself how she found the will and contrivance to run away from him. About finding her mother, her only notion now is to trust: since you were sent to save her and we are good to her, she trusts that her mother will be found in the same unsought way. And when she is talking I catch her feeling like a child."

Mrs Meyrick hoped that the sum Deronda put into her hands as a provision for Mirah's wants was more than would be needed: after a little while Mirah would perhaps like to occupy herself as the other girls did, and make herself independent. Deronda pleaded that she must need a long rest.

"Oh yes; we will hurry nothing," said Mrs Meyrick. "Rely upon it, she shall be taken tender care of. If you like to give me your address abroad, I will write to let you know how we get on. It is not fair that we should have all the pleasure of her salvation to ourselves. And besides, I want to make believe that I am doing something for you as well as for Mirah."

"That is no make-believe. What should I have done without you last night? Everything would have gone wrong. I shall tell Hans that the best of having him for a friend is, knowing his mother."

After that they joined the girls in the other room, where Mirah was seated placidly, while the others were telling her what they knew about Mr Deronda—his goodness to Hans, and all the virtues that Hans had reported of him.

"Kate burns a pastille before his portrait every day," said Mab. "And I carry his signature in a little black-silk bag round my neck to keep off the

cramp. And Amy says the multiplication-table in his name. We must all do something extra in honour of him, now he has brought you to us."

"I suppose he is too great a person to want anything," said Mirah, smiling at Mab, and appealing to the graver Amy. "He is perhaps very high in the world?"

"He is very much above us in rank," said Amy. "He is related to grand people. I daresay he leans on some of the satin cushions we prick our fingers over."

"I am glad he is of high rank," said Mirah, with her usual quietness.

"Now, why are you glad of that?" said Amy, rather suspicious of this sentiment, and on the watch for Jewish peculiarities which had not appeared.

"Because I have always disliked men of high rank before."

"Oh, Mr Deronda is not so very high," said Kate. "He need not hinder us from thinking ill of the whole peerage and baronetage if we like."

When he entered, Mirah rose with the same look of grateful reverence that she had lifted to him the evening before: impossible to see a creature freer at once from embarrassment and boldness. Her theatrical training had left no recog-

nisable trace; probably her manners had not much changed since she played the forsaken child at nine years of age; and she had grown up in her simplicity and truthfulness like a little flower-seed that absorbs the chance confusion of its surroundings into its own definite mould of beauty. Deronda felt that he was making acquaintance with something quite new to him in the form of womanhood. For Mirah was not childlike from ignorance: her experience of evil and trouble was deeper and stranger than his own. He felt inclined to watch her and listen to her as if she had come from a far-off shore inhabited by a race different from our own.

But for that very reason he made his visit brief: with his usual activity of imagination as to how his conduct might affect others, he shrank from what might seem like curiosity, or the assumption of a right to know as much as he pleased of one to whom he had done a service. For example, he would have liked to hear her sing, but he would have felt the expression of such a wish to be a rudeness in him—since she could not refuse, and he would all the while have a sense that she was being treated like one whose accomplishments were to be ready on demand. And whatever reverence could be shown to woman, he was bent

on showing to this girl. Why? He gave himself several good reasons; but whatever one does with a strong unhesitating outflow of will, has a store of motive that it would be hard to put into words. Some deeds seem little more than interjections which give vent to the long passion of a life.

So Deronda soon took his farewell for the two months during which he expected to be absent from London, and in a few days he was on his way with Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger to Leubronn.

He had fulfilled his intention of telling them about Mirah. The baronet was decidedly of opinion that the search for the mother and brother had better be let alone. Lady Mallinger was much interested in the poor girl, observing that there was a Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and that it was to be hoped Mirah would embrace Christianity; but perceiving that Sir Hugo looked at her with amusement, she concluded that she had said something foolish. Lady Mallinger felt apologetically about herself as a woman who had produced nothing but daughters in a case where sons were required, and hence regarded the apparent contradictions of the world as probably due to the weakness of her own understanding. But when she was much puzzled, it was her habit

to say to herself, "I will ask Daniel." Deronda was altogether a convenience in the family; and Sir Hugo too, after intending to do the best for him, had begun to feel that the pleasantest result would be to have this substitute for a son always ready at his elbow.

This was the history of Deronda, so far as he knew it, up to the time of that visit to Leubronn in which he saw Gwendolen Harleth at the gaming-table.

CHAPTER XXI.

It is a common sentence that Knowledge is power; but who hath duly considered or set forth the power of Ignorance? Knowledge slowly builds up what Ignorance in an hour pulls down. Knowledge, through patient and frugal centuries, enlarges discovery and makes record of it; Ignorance, wanting its day's dinner, lights a fire with the record, and gives a flavour to its one roast with the burnt souls of many generations. Knowledge, instructing the sense, refining and multiplying needs, transforms itself into skill and makes life various with a new six days' work; comes Ignorance drunk on the seventh, with a firkin of oil and a match and an easy "Let there not be"—and the many-coloured creation is shrivelled up in blackness. Of a truth, Knowledge is power, but it is a power reined by scruple, having a conscience of what must be and what may be; whereas Ignorance is a blind giant who, let him but wax unbound, would make it a sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good, and turn all the places of joy dark as a buried Babylon. And looking at life parcel-wise, in the growth of a single lot, who having a practised vision may not see that ignorance of the true bond between events, and false conceit of means whereby sequences may be compelled—like that falsity of eyesight which overlooks the gradations of distance, seeing that which is afar off as if it were within a step or a grasp—precipitates the mistaken soul on destruction?

It was half-past ten in the morning when Gwendolen Harleth, after her gloomy journey from Leubronn, arrived at the station from which she must drive to Offendene. No carriage or friend was awaiting her, for in the telegram she had sent from Dover she had mentioned a later train,

and in her impatience of lingering at a London station she had set off without picturing what it would be to arrive unannounced at half an hour's drive from home—at one of those stations which have been fixed on not as near anywhere but as equidistant from everywhere. Deposited as a *feme sole* with her large trunks, and having to wait while a vehicle was being got from the large-sized lantern called the Railway Inn, Gwendolen felt that the dirty paint in the waiting-room, the dusty decanter of flat water, and the texts in large letters calling on her to repent and be converted, were part of the dreary prospect opened by her family troubles; and she hurried away to the outer door looking towards the lane and fields. But here the very gleams of sunshine seemed melancholy, for the autumnal leaves and grass were shivering, and the wind was turning up the feathers of a cock and two croaking hens which had doubtless parted with their grown-up offspring and did not know what to do with themselves. The railway official also seemed without resources, and his innocent demeanour in observing Gwendolen and her trunks was rendered intolerable by the cast in his eye; especially since, being a new man, he did not know her, and must conclude that she was not very high in the

world. The vehicle—a dirty old barouche—was within sight, and was being slowly prepared by an elderly labourer. Contemptible details these, to make part of a history; yet the turn of most lives is hardly to be accounted for without them. They are continually entering with cumulative force into a mood until it gets the mass and momentum of a theory or a motive. Even philosophy is not quite free from such determining influences; and to be dropt solitary at an ugly irrelevant-looking spot with a sense of no income on the mind, might well prompt a man to discouraging speculation on the origin of things and the reason of a world where a subtle thinker found himself so badly off. How much more might such trifles tell on a young lady equipped for society with a fastidious taste, an Indian shawl over her arm, some ten cubic feet of trunks by her side, and a mortal dislike to the new consciousness of poverty which was stimulating her imagination of disagreeables? At any rate they told heavily on poor Gwendolen, and helped to quell her resistant spirit. What was the good of living in the midst of hardships, ugliness, and humiliation? This was the beginning of being at home again, and it was a sample of what she had to expect.

Here was the theme on which her discontent rung its sad changes during her slow drive in the uneasy barouche, with one great trunk squeezing the meek driver, and the other fastened with a rope on the seat in front of her. Her ruling vision all the way from Leubronn had been that the family would go abroad again; for of course there must be some little income left—her mamma did not mean that they would have literally nothing. To go to a dull place abroad and live poorly, was the dismal future that threatened her: she had seen plenty of poor English people abroad, and imagined herself plunged in the despised dulness of their ill-plenished lives, with Alice, Bertha, Fanny, and Isabel all growing up in tediousness around her, while she advanced towards thirty, and her mamma got more and more melancholy. But she did not mean to submit, and let misfortune do what it would with her: she had not yet quite believed in the misfortune; but weariness, and disgust with this wretched arrival, had begun to affect her like an uncomfortable waking, worse than the uneasy dreams which had gone before. The self-delight with which she had kissed her image in the glass had faded before the sense of futility in being anything whatever—charming, clever, resolute—what was the good of it all?

Events might turn out anyhow, and men were hateful. Yes, men were hateful. Those few words were filled out with very vivid memories. But in these last hours, a certain change had come over their meaning. It is one thing to hate stolen goods, and another thing to hate them the more because their being stolen hinders us from making use of them. Gwendolen had begun to be angry with Grandcourt for being what had hindered her from marrying him, angry with him as the cause of her present dreary lot.

But the slow drive was nearly at an end, and the lumbering vehicle coming up the avenue was within sight of the windows. A figure appearing under the portico brought a rush of new and less selfish feeling in Gwendolen, and when springing from the carriage she saw the dear beautiful face with fresh lines of sadness in it, she threw her arms round her mother's neck, and for the moment felt all sorrows only in relation to her mother's feeling about them.

Behind, of course, were the sad faces of the four superfluous girls, each, poor thing—like those other many thousand sisters of us all—having her peculiar world which was of no importance to any one else, but all of them feeling Gwendolen's presence to be somehow a relenting of misfortune:

where Gwendolen was, something interesting would happen; even her hurried submission to their kisses, and "Now go away, girls," carried the sort of comfort which all weakness finds in decision and authoritativeness. Good Miss Merry, whose air of meek depression, hitherto held unaccountable in a governess affectionately attached to the family, was now at the general level of circumstances, did not expect any greeting, but busied herself with the trunks and the coachman's pay; while Mrs Davilow and Gwendolen hastened up-stairs and shut themselves in the black and yellow bedroom.

"Never mind, mamma dear," said Gwendolen, tenderly pressing her handkerchief against the tears that were rolling down Mrs Davilow's cheeks. "Never mind. I don't mind. I will do something. I will be something. Things will come right. It seemed worse because I was away. Come now! you must be glad because I am here."

Gwendolen felt every word of that speech. A rush of compassionate tenderness stirred all her capability of generous resolution; and the self-confident projects which had vaguely glanced before her during her journey sprang instantaneously into new definiteness. Suddenly she

seemed to perceive how she could be "something." It was one of her best moments, and the fond mother, forgetting everything below that tide-mark, looked at her with a sort of adoration. She said—

"Bless you, my good, good darling! I can be happy, if you can!"

But later in the day there was an ebb; the old slippery rocks, the old weedy places reappeared. Naturally, there was a shrinking of courage as misfortune ceased to be a mere announcement, and began to disclose itself as a grievous tyrannical inmate. At first—that ugly drive at an end—it was still Offendene that Gwendolen had come home to, and all surroundings of immediate consequence to her were still there to secure her personal ease; the roomy stillness of the large solid house while she rested; all the luxuries of her toilet cared for without trouble to her; and a little tray with her favourite food brought to her in private. For she had said, "Keep them all away from us to-day, mamma. Let you and me be alone together."

When Gwendolen came down into the drawing-room, fresh as a newly-dipped swan, and sat leaning against the cushions of the settee beside her mamma, their misfortune had not yet turned

its face and breath upon her. She felt prepared to hear everything, and began in a tone of deliberate intention:

"What have you thought of doing exactly, mamma?"

"Oh my dear, the next thing to be done is to move away from this house. Mr Haynes most fortunately is as glad to have it now as he would have been when we took it. Lord Brackenshaw's agent is to arrange everything with him to the best advantage for us: Bazley, you know; not at all an ill-natured man."

"I cannot help thinking that Lord Brackenshaw would let you stay here rent-free, mamma," said Gwendolen, whose talents had not been applied to business so much as to discernment of the admiration excited by her charms.

"My dear child, Lord Brackenshaw is in Scotland, and knows nothing about us. Neither your uncle nor I would choose to apply to him. Besides, what could we do in this house without servants, and without money to warm it? The sooner we are out the better. We have nothing to carry but our clothes, you know."

"I suppose you mean to go abroad, then?" said Gwendolen. After all, this was what she had familiarised her mind with.

"Oh no, dear, no. How could we travel? You never did learn anything about income and expenses," said Mrs Davilow, trying to smile, and putting her hand on Gwendolen's as she added, mournfully, "that makes it so much harder for you, my pet."

"But where are we to go?" said Gwendolen, with a trace of sharpness in her tone. She felt a new current of fear passing through her.

"It is all decided. A little furniture is to be got in from the rectory—all that can be spared." Mrs Davilow hesitated. She dreaded the reality for herself less than the shock she must give Gwendolen, who looked at her with tense expectancy, but was silent.

"It is Sawyer's Cottage we are to go to."

At first, Gwendolen remained silent, paling with anger—justifiable anger, in her opinion. Then she said with haughtiness—

"That is impossible. Something else than that ought to have been thought of. My uncle ought not to allow that. I will not submit to it."

"My sweet child, what else could have been thought of? Your uncle, I am sure, is as kind as he can be; but he is suffering himself: he has his family to bring up. And do you quite understand? You must remember—we have nothing.

We shall have absolutely nothing except what he and my sister give us. They have been as wise and active as possible, and we must try to earn something. I and the girls are going to work a table-cloth border for the Ladies' Charity at Wancester, and a communion cloth that the parishioners are to present to Pennicote Church."

Mrs Davilow went into these details timidly; but how else was she to bring the fact of their position home to this poor child who, alas! must submit at present, whatever might be in the background for her? and she herself had a superstition that there must be something better in the background.

"But surely somewhere else than Sawyer's Cottage might have been found," Gwendolen persisted—taken hold of (as if in a nightmare) by the image of this house where an exciseman had lived.

"No, indeed, dear. You know houses are scarce, and we may be thankful to get anything so private. It is not so very bad. There are two little parlours and four bedrooms. You shall sit alone whenever you like."

The ebb of sympathetic care for her mamma had gone so low just now, that Gwendolen took no notice of these deprecatory words.

"I cannot conceive that all your property is

gone at once, mamma. How can you be sure in so short a time? It is not a week since you wrote to me."

"The first news came much earlier, dear. But I would not spoil your pleasure till it was quite necessary."

"Oh how vexatious!" said Gwendolen, colouring with fresh anger. "If I had known, I could have brought home the money I had won; and for want of knowing, I stayed and lost it. I had nearly two hundred pounds, and it would have done for us to live on a little while, till I could carry out some plan." She paused an instant and then added more impetuously, "Everything has gone against me. People have come near me only to blight me."

Among the "people" she was including Deronda. If he had not interfered in her life she would have gone to the gaming-table again with a few napoleons, and might have won back her losses.

"We must resign ourselves to the will of Providence, my child," said poor Mrs Davilow, startled by this revelation of the gambling, but not daring to say more. She felt sure that "people" meant Grandcourt, about whom her lips were sealed. And Gwendolen answered immediately—

"But I don't resign myself. I shall do what I

can against it. What is the good of calling people's wickedness Providence? You said in your letter it was Mr Lassmann's fault we had lost our money. Has he run away with it all?"

"No, dear, you don't understand. There were great speculations: he meant to gain. It was all about mines and things of that sort. He risked too much."

"I don't call that Providence: it was his improvidence with our money, and he ought to be punished. Can't we go to law and recover our fortune? My uncle ought to take measures, and not sit down by such wrongs. We ought to go to law."

"My dear child, law can never bring back money lost in that way. Your uncle says it is milk spilt upon the ground. Besides, one must have a fortune to get any law: there is no law for people who are ruined. And our money has only gone along with other people's. We are not the only sufferers: others have to resign themselves besides us."

"But I don't resign myself to live at Sawyer's Cottage and see you working for sixpences and shillings because of that. I shall not do it. I shall do what is more befitting our rank and education."

"I am sure your uncle and all of us will approve

of that, dear, and admire you the more for it," said Mrs Davilow, glad of an unexpected opening for speaking on a difficult subject. "I didn't mean that you should resign yourself to worse when anything better offered itself. Both your uncle and aunt have felt that your abilities and education were a fortune for you, and they have already heard of something within your reach."

"What is that, mamma?" Some of Gwendolen's anger gave way to interest, and she was not without romantic conjectures.

"There are two situations that offer themselves. One is in a bishop's family, where there are three daughters, and the other is in quite a high class of school; and in both your French, and music, and dancing—and then your manners and habits as a lady, are exactly what is wanted. Each is a hundred a-year—and—just for the present"—Mrs Davilow had become frightened and hesitating—"to save you from the petty, common way of living that we must go to—you would perhaps accept one of the two."

"What! be like Miss Graves at Madame Meunier's? No."

"I think, myself, that Dr Mompert's would be more suitable. There could be no hardship in a bishop's family."

"Excuse me, mamma. There are hardships everywhere for a governess. And I don't see that it would be pleasanter to be looked down on in a bishop's family than in any other. Besides, you know very well I hate teaching. Fancy me shut up with three awkward girls something like Alice! I would rather emigrate than be a governess."

What it precisely was to emigrate, Gwendolen was not called on to explain. Mrs Davilow was mute, seeing no outlet, and thinking with dread of the collision that might happen when Gwendolen had to meet her uncle and aunt. There was an air of reticence in Gwendolen's haughty resistant speeches, which implied that she had a definite plan in reserve; and her practical ignorance, continually exhibited, could not nullify the mother's belief in the effectiveness of that forcible will and daring which had held the mastery over herself.

"I have some ornaments, mamma, and I could sell them," said Gwendolen. "They would make a sum: I want a little sum—just to go on with. I dare say Marshall at Wancester would take them: I know he showed me some bracelets once that he said he had bought from a lady. Jocosa might go and ask him. Jocosa is going to leave us, of course. But she might do that first."

"She would do anything she could, poor dear soul. I have not told you yet—she wanted me to take all her savings—her three hundred pounds. I tell her to set up a little school. It will be hard for her to go into a new family now she has been so long with us."

"Oh, recommend her for the bishop's daughters," said Gwendolen, with a sudden gleam of laughter in her face. "I am sure she will do better than I should."

"Do take care not to say such things to your uncle," said Mrs Davilow. "He will be hurt at your despising what he has exerted himself about. But I daresay you have something else in your mind that he might not disapprove, if you consulted him."

"There is some one else I want to consult first. Are the Arrowpoints at Quetcham still, and is Herr Klesmer there? But I daresay you know nothing about it, poor dear mamma. Can Jeffries go on horseback with a note?"

"Oh, my dear, Jeffries is not here, and the dealer has taken the horses. But some one could go for us from Leek's farm. The Arrowpoints are at Quetcham, I know. Miss Arrowpoint left her card the other day. I could not see her. But I don't know about Herr Klesmer. Do you want to send before to-morrow?"

"Yes, as soon as possible. I will write a note," said Gwendolen, rising.

"What can you be thinking of, Gwen?" said Mrs Davilow, relieved in the midst of her wonderment by signs of alacrity and better humour.

"Don't mind what, there's a dear good mamma," said Gwendolen, reseating herself a moment to give atoning caresses. "I mean to do something. Never mind what, until it is all settled. And then you shall be comforted. The dear face!—it is ten years older in these three weeks. Now, now, now! don't cry"—Gwendolen, holding her mamma's head with both hands, kissed the trembling eyelids. "But mind you don't contradict me or put hindrances in my way. I must decide for myself. I cannot be dictated to by my uncle or any one else. My life is my own affair. And I think"—here her tone took an edge of scorn—"I think I can do better for you than let you live in Sawyer's Cottage."

In uttering this last sentence Gwendolen again rose, and went to a desk where she wrote the following note to Klesmer:—

"Miss Harleth presents her compliments to Herr Klesmer and ventures to request of him the very great favour that he will call upon her,

if possible to-morrow. Her reason for presuming so far on his kindness is of a very serious nature. Unfortunate family circumstances have obliged her to take a course in which she can only turn for advice to the great knowledge and judgment of Herr Klesmer."

"Pray get this sent to Quetcham at once, mamma," said Gwendolen, as she addressed the letter. "The man must be told to wait for an answer. Let no time be lost."

For the moment, the absorbing purpose was to get the letter despatched; but when she had been assured on this point, another anxiety arose and kept her in a state of uneasy excitement. If Klesmer happened not to be at Quetcham, what could she do next? Gwendolen's belief in her star, so to speak, had had some bruises. Things had gone against her. A splendid marriage which presented itself within reach had shown a hideous flaw. The chances of roulette had not adjusted themselves to her claims; and a man of whom she knew nothing had thrust himself between her and her intentions. The conduct of those uninteresting people who managed the business of the world had been culpable just in the points most injurious to her in particular. Gwendolen

Harleth, with all her beauty and conscious force, felt the close threats of humiliation: for the first time the conditions of this world seemed to her like a hurrying roaring crowd in which she had got astray, no more cared for and protected than a myriad of other girls, in spite of its being a peculiar hardship to her. If Klesmer were not at Quetcham—that would be all of a piece with the rest: the unwelcome negative urged itself as a probability, and set her brain working at desperate alternatives which might deliver her from Sawyer's Cottage or the ultimate necessity of "taking a situation," a phrase that summed up for her the disagreeables most wounding to her pride, most irksome to her tastes; at least so far as her experience enabled her to imagine disagreeables.

Still Klesmer might be there, and Gwendolen thought of the result in that case with a hopefulness which even cast a satisfactory light over her peculiar troubles, as what might well enter into the biography of celebrities and remarkable persons. And if she had heard her immediate acquaintances cross-examined as to whether they thought her remarkable, the first who said "No" would have surprised her.

CHAPTER XXII.

We please our fancy with ideal webs
Of innovation, but our life meanwhile
Is in the loom, where busy passion plies
The shuttle to and fro, and gives our deeds
The accustomed pattern.

GWENDOLEN'S note, coming "pat betwixt too early and too late," was put into Klesmer's hands just when he was leaving Quetcham, and in order to meet her appeal to his kindness he with some inconvenience to himself spent the night at Wancester. There were reasons why he would not remain at Quetcham.

That magnificent mansion, fitted with regard to the greatest expense, had in fact become too hot for him, its owners having, like some great politicians, been astonished at an insurrection against the established order of things, which we plain people after the event can perceive to have been prepared under their very noses.

There were as usual many guests in the house,

and among them one in whom Miss Arrowpoint foresaw a new pretender to her hand: a political man of good family who confidently expected a peerage, and felt on public grounds that he required a larger fortune to support the title properly. Heiresses vary, and persons interested in one of them beforehand are prepared to find that she is too yellow or too red, tall and toppling or short and square, violent and capricious or moony and insipid; but in every case it is taken for granted that she will consider herself an appendage to her fortune, and marry where others think her fortune ought to go. Nature, however, not only accommodates herself ill to our favourite practices by making "only children" daughters, but also now and then endows the misplaced daughter with a clear head and a strong will. The Arrowpoints had already felt some anxiety owing to these endowments of their Catherine. She would not accept the view of her social duty which required her to marry a needy nobleman or a commoner on the ladder towards nobility; and they were not without uneasiness concerning her persistence in declining suitable offers. As to the possibility of her being in love with Klesmer they were not at all uneasy—a very common sort of blindness. For in general mortals have a great

power of being astonished at the presence of an effect towards which they have done everything, and at the absence of an effect towards which they have done nothing but desire it. Parents are astonished at the ignorance of their sons, though they have used the most time-honoured and expensive means of securing it; husbands and wives are mutually astonished at the loss of affection which they have taken no pains to keep; and all of us in our turn are apt to be astonished that our neighbours do not admire us. In this way it happens that the truth seems highly improbable. The truth is something different from the habitual lazy combinations begotten by our wishes. The Arrowpoints' hour of astonishment was come.

When there is a passion between an heiress and a proud independent-spirited man, it is difficult for them to come to an understanding; but the difficulties are likely to be overcome unless the proud man secures himself by a constant *alibi*. Brief meetings after studied absence are potent in disclosure: but more potent still is frequent companionship, with full sympathy in taste, and admirable qualities on both sides; especially where the one is in the position of teacher and the other is delightedly conscious of receptive

ability which also gives the teacher delight. The situation is famous in history, and has no less charm now than it had in the days of Abelard.

But this kind of comparison had not occurred to the Arrowpoints when they first engaged Klesmer to come down to Quetcham. To have a first-rate musician in your house is a privilege of wealth; Catherine's musical talent demanded every advantage; and she particularly desired to use her quieter time in the country for more thorough study. Klesmer was not yet a Liszt, understood to be adored by ladies of all European countries with the exception of Lapland: and even with that understanding it did not follow that he would make proposals to an heiress. No musician of honour would do so. Still less was it conceivable that Catherine would give him the slightest pretext for such daring. The large cheque that Mr Arrowpoint was to draw in Klesmer's name seemed to make him as safe an inmate as a footman. Where marriage is inconceivable, a girl's sentiments are safe.

Klesmer was eminently a man of honour, but marriages rarely begin with formal proposals, and moreover, Catherine's limit of the conceivable did not exactly correspond with her mother's.

Outsiders might have been more apt to think

that Klesmer's position was dangerous for himself if Miss Arrowpoint had been an acknowledged beauty; not taking into account that the most powerful of all beauty is that which reveals itself after sympathy and not before it. There is a charm of eye and lip which comes with every little phrase that certifies delicate perception or fine judgment, with every unostentatious word or smile that shows a heart awake to others; and no sweep of garment or turn of figure is more satisfying than that which enters as a restoration of confidence that one person is present on whom no intention will be lost. What dignity of meaning goes on gathering in frowns and laughs which are never observed in the wrong place; what suffused adorableness in a human frame where there is a mind that can flash out comprehension and hands that can execute finely! The more obvious beauty, also adorable sometimes—one may say it without blasphemy—begins by being an apology for folly, and ends like other apologies in becoming tiresome by iteration; and that Klesmer, though very susceptible to it, should have a passionate attachment to Miss Arrowpoint, was no more a paradox than any other triumph of a manifold sympathy over a monotonous attraction. We object less to be taxed with the enslaving excess of our passions

than with our deficiency in wider passion ; but if the truth were known, our reputed intensity is often the dulness of not knowing what else to do with ourselves. Tannhäuser, one suspects, was a knight of ill-furnished imagination, hardly of larger discourse than a heavy Guardsman; Merlin had certainly seen his best days, and was merely repeating himself, when he fell into that hopeless captivity ; and we know that Ulysses felt so manifest an *ennui* under similar circumstances that Calypso herself furthered his departure. There is indeed a report that he afterwards left Penelope; but since she was habitually absorbed in worsted work, and it was probably from her that Telemachus got his mean, pettifogging disposition, always anxious about the property and the daily consumption of meat, no inference can be drawn from this already dubious scandal as to the relation between companionship and constancy.

Klesmer was as versatile and fascinating as a young Ulysses on a sufficient acquaintance—one whom nature seemed to have first made generously and then to have added music as a dominant power using all the abundant rest, and, as in Mendelssohn, finding expression for itself not only in the highest finish of execution, but in that fervour of creative work and theoretic belief

which pierces the whole future of a life with the light of congruous, devoted purpose. His foibles of arrogance and vanity did not exceed such as may be found in the best English families; and Catherine Arrowpoint had no corresponding restlessness to clash with his: notwithstanding her native kindliness she was perhaps too coolly firm and self-sustained. But she was one of those satisfactory creatures whose intercourse has the charm of discovery; whose integrity of faculty and expression begets a wish to know what they will say on all subjects, or how they will perform whatever they undertake; so that they end by raising not only a continual expectation but a continual sense of fulfilment—the systole and diastole of blissful companionship. In such cases the outward presentment easily becomes what the image is to the worshipper. It was not long before the two became aware that each was interesting to the other; but the 'how far' remained a matter of doubt. Klesmer did not conceive that Miss Arrowpoint was likely to think of him as a possible lover, and she was not accustomed to think of herself as likely to stir more than a friendly regard, or to fear the expression of more from any man who was not enamoured of her fortune. Each was content to suffer some un-

shared sense of denial for the sake of loving the other's society a little too well; and under these conditions no need had been felt to restrict Klesmer's visits for the last year either in country or in town. He knew very well that if Miss Arrowpoint had been poor he would have made ardent love to her instead of sending a storm through the piano, or folding his arms and pouring out a hyperbolical tirade about something as impersonal as the north pole; and she was not less aware that if it had been possible for Klesmer to wish for her hand she would have found overmastering reasons for giving it to him. Here was the safety of full cups, which are as secure from overflow as the half-empty, always supposing no disturbance. Naturally, silent feeling had not remained at the same point any more than the stealthy dial-hand, and in the present visit to Quetcham, Klesmer had begun to think that he would not come again; while Catherine was more sensitive to his frequent *brusquerie*, which she rather resented as a needless effort to assert his footing of superior in every sense except the conventional.

Meanwhile enters the expectant peer, Mr Bult, an esteemed party man who, rather neutral in private life, had strong opinions concerning the

districts of the Niger, was much at home also in the Brazils, spoke with decision of affairs in the South Seas, was studious of his parliamentary and itinerant speeches, and had the general solidity and suffusive pinkness of a healthy Briton on the central table-land of life. Catherine, aware of a tacit understanding that he was an undeniable husband for an heiress, had nothing to say against him but that he was thoroughly tiresome to her. Mr Bult was amiably confident, and had no idea that his insensibility to counterpoint could ever be reckoned against him. Klesmer he hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being who ought to have a vote; and he did not mind Miss Arrowpoint's addiction to music any more than her probable expenses in antique lace. He was consequently a little amazed at an after-dinner outburst of Klesmer's on the lack of idealism in English politics, which left all mutuality between distant races to be determined simply by the need of a market: the crusades, to his mind, had at least this excuse, that they had a banner of sentiment round which generous feelings could rally: of course, the scoundrels rallied too, but what then? they rally in equal force round your advertisement van of "Buy cheap, sell dear." On this theme Klesmer's eloquence, gesticulatory

and other, went on for a little while like stray fireworks accidentally ignited, and then sank into immovable silence. Mr Bult was not surprised that Klesmer's opinions should be flighty, but was astonished at his command of English idiom and his ability to put a point in a way that would have told at a constituents' dinner—to be accounted for probably by his being a Pole, or a Czech, or something of that fermenting sort, in a state of political refugeeism which had obliged him to make a profession of his music; and that evening in the drawing-room he for the first time went up to Klesmer at the piano, Miss Arrowpoint being near, and said—

"I had no idea before that you were a political man."

Klesmer's only answer was to fold his arms, put out his nether lip, and stare at Mr Bult.

"You must have been used to public speaking. You speak uncommonly well, though I don't agree with you. From what you said about sentiment, I fancy you are a Panslavist."

"No; my name is Elijah. I am the Wandering Jew," said Klesmer, flashing a smile at Miss Arrowpoint, and suddenly making a mysterious wind-like rush backwards and forwards on the piano. Mr Bult felt this buffoonery rather of-

fensive and Polish, but—Miss Arrowpoint being there—did not like to move away.

"Herr Klesmer has cosmopolitan ideas," said Miss Arrowpoint, trying to make the best of the situation. "He looks forward to a fusion of races."

"With all my heart," said Mr Bult, willing to be gracious. "I was sure he had too much talent to be a mere musician."

"Ah, sir, you are under some mistake there," said Klesmer, firing up. "No man has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little. A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. We are not ingenious puppets, sir, who live in a box and look out on the world only when it is gaping for amusement. We help to rule the nations and make the age as much as any other public men. We count ourselves on level benches with legislators. And a man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than parliamentary eloquence."

With the last word Klesmer wheeled from the piano and walked away.

Miss Arrowpoint coloured, and Mr Bult observed with his usual phlegmatic solidity, "Your pianist does not think small beer of himself."

"Herr Klesmer is something more than a pianist," said Miss Arrowpoint, apologetically. "He is a great musician in the fullest sense of the word. He will rank with Schubert and Mendelssohn."

"Ah, you ladies understand these things," said Mr Bult, none the less convinced that these things were frivolous because Klesmer had shown himself a coxcomb.

Catherine, always sorry when Klesmer gave himself airs, found an opportunity the next day in the music-room to say, "Why were you so heated last night with Mr Bult? He meant no harm."

"You wish me to be complaisant to him?" said Klesmer, rather fiercely.

"I think it is hardly worth your while to be other than civil."

"You find no difficulty in tolerating him, then? —you have a respect for a political platitudinarian as insensible as an ox to everything he can't turn into political capital. You think his monumental obtuseness suited to the dignity of the English gentleman."

"I did not say that."

"You mean that I acted without dignity and you are offended with me."

"Now you are slightly nearer the truth," said Catherine, smiling.

"Then I had better put my burial-clothes in my portmanteau and set off at once."

"I don't see that. If I have to bear your criticism of my operetta, you should not mind my criticism of your impatience."

"But I do mind it. You would have wished me to take his ignorant impertinence about a 'mere musician' without letting him know his place. I am to hear my gods blasphemed as well as myself insulted. But I beg pardon. It is impossible you should see the matter as I do. Even you can't understand the wrath of the artist: he is of another caste for you."

"That is true," said Catherine, with some betrayal of feeling. "He is of a caste to which I look up—a caste above mine."

Klesmer, who had been seated at a table looking over scores, started up and walked to a little distance, from which he said—

"That is finely felt—I am grateful. But I had better go, all the same. I have made up my mind to go, for good and all. You can get on exceedingly well without me: your operetta is on wheels—it will go of itself. And your Mr Bult's company fits me 'wie die Faust ins Auge.' I am

neglecting my engagements. I must go off to St Petersburg."

There was no answer.

"You agree with me that I had better go?" said Klesmer, with some irritation.

"Certainly; if that is what your business and feeling prompt. I have only to wonder that you have consented to give us so much of your time in the last year. There must be treble the interest to you anywhere else. I have never thought of your consenting to come here as anything else than a sacrifice."

"Why should I make the sacrifice?" said Klesmer, going to seat himself at the piano, and touching the keys so as to give with the delicacy of an echo in the far distance a melody which he had set to Heine's "Ich hab' dich geliebet und liebe dich noch."

"That is the mystery," said Catherine, not wanting to affect anything, but from mere agitation. From the same cause she was tearing a piece of paper into minute morsels, as if at a task of utmost multiplication imposed by a cruel fairy.

"You can conceive no motive?" said Klesmer, folding his arms.

"None that seems in the least probable."

"Then I shall tell you. It is because you are

to me the chief woman in the world—the throned lady whose colours I carry between my heart and my armour."

Catherine's hands trembled so much that she could no longer tear the paper: still less could her lips utter a word. Klesmer went on—

"This would be the last impertinence in me, if I meant to found anything upon it. That is out of the question. I mean no such thing. But you once said it was your doom to suspect every man who courted you of being an adventurer, and what made you angriest was men's imputing to you the folly of believing that they courted you for your own sake. Did you not say so?"

"Very likely," was the answer, in a low murmur.

"It was a bitter word. Well, at least one man who has seen women as plenty as flowers in May has lingered about you for your own sake. And since he is one whom you can never marry, you will believe him. That is an argument in favour of some other man. But don't give yourself for a meal to a minotaur like Bult. I shall go now and pack. I shall make my excuses to Mrs Arrowpoint." Klesmer rose as he ended, and walked quickly towards the door.

"You must take this heap of manuscript, then," said Catherine, suddenly making a desperate

effort. She had risen to fetch the heap from another table. Klesmer came back, and they had the length of the folio sheets between them.

"Why should I not marry the man who loves me, if I love him?" said Catherine. To her the effort was something like the leap of a woman from the deck into the lifeboat.

"It would be too hard—impossible—you could not carry it through. I am not worth what you would have to encounter. I will not accept the sacrifice. It would be thought a *mésalliance* for you, and I should be liable to the worst accusations."

"Is it the accusations you are afraid of? I am afraid of nothing but that we should miss the passing of our lives together."

The decisive word had been spoken: there was no doubt concerning the end willed by each: there only remained the way of arriving at it, and Catherine determined to take the straightest possible. She went to her father and mother in the library, and told them that she had promised to marry Klesmer.

Mrs Arrowpoint's state of mind was pitiable. Imagine Jean Jacques, after his essay on the corrupting influence of the arts, waking up among children of nature who had no idea of grilling the

raw bone they offered him for breakfast with the primitive *couvert* of a flint; or Saint Just, after fervidly denouncing all recognition of pre-eminence, receiving a vote of thanks for the unbroken mediocrity of his speech, which warranted the dullest patriots in delivering themselves at equal length. Something of the same sort befell the authoress of 'Tasso,' when what she had safely demanded of the dead Leonora was enacted by her own Catherine. It is hard for us to live up to our own eloquence, and keep pace with our winged words, while we are treading the solid earth and are liable to heavy dining. Besides, it has long been understood that the proprieties of literature are not those of practical life. Mrs Arrowpoint naturally wished for the best of everything. She not only liked to feel herself at a higher level of literary sentiment than the ladies with whom she associated; she wished not to be below them in any point of social consideration. While Klesmer was seen in the light of a patronised musician, his peculiarities were picturesque and acceptable; but to see him by a sudden flash in the light of her son-in-law gave her a burning sense of what the world would say. And the poor lady had been used to represent her Catherine as a model of excellence.

Under the first shock she forgot everything but her anger, and snatched at any phrase that would serve as a weapon.

"If Klesmer has presumed to offer himself to you, your father shall horsewhip him off the premises. Pray, speak, Mr Arrowpoint."

The father took his cigar from his mouth, and rose to the occasion by saying, "This will never do, Cath."

"Do!" cried Mrs Arrowpoint; "who in their senses ever thought it would do? You might as well say poisoning and strangling will not do. It is a comedy you have got up, Catherine. Else you are mad."

"I am quite sane and serious, mamma, and Herr Klesmer is not to blame. He never thought of my marrying him. I found out that he loved me, and loving him, I told him I would marry him."

"Leave that unsaid, Catherine," said Mrs Arrowpoint, bitterly. "Every one else will say it for you. You will be a public fable. Every one will say that you must have made the offer to a man who has been paid to come to the house—who is nobody knows what—a gypsy, a Jew, a mere bubble of the earth."

"Never mind, mamma," said Catherine, indig-

nant in her turn. "We all know he is a genius —as Tasso was."

"Those times were not these, nor is Klesmer Tasso," said Mrs Arrowpoint, getting more heated. "There is no sting in *that* sarcasm, except the sting of undutifulness."

"I am sorry to hurt you, mamma. But I will not give up the happiness of my life to ideas that I don't believe in and customs I have no respect for."

"You have lost all sense of duty, then? You have forgotten that you are our only child—that it lies with you to place a great property in the right hands?"

"What are the right hands? My grandfather gained the property in trade."

"Mr Arrowpoint, *will* you sit by and hear this without speaking?"

"I am a gentleman, Cath. We expect you to marry a gentleman," said the father, exerting himself.

"And a man connected with the institutions of this country," said the mother. "A woman in your position has serious duties. Where duty and inclination clash, she must follow duty."

"I don't deny that," said Catherine, getting colder in proportion to her mother's heat. "But

one may say very true things and apply them falsely. People can easily take the sacred word duty as a name for what they desire any one else to do."

"Your parent's desire makes no duty for you, then?"

"Yes, within reason. But before I give up the happiness of my life——"

"Catherine, Catherine, it will not be your happiness," said Mrs Arrowpoint, in her most raven-like tones.

"Well, what seems to me my happiness—before I give it up, I must see some better reason than the wish that I should marry a nobleman, or a man who votes with a party that he may be turned into a nobleman. I feel at liberty to marry the man I love and think worthy, unless some higher duty forbids."

"And so it does, Catherine, though you are blinded and cannot see it. It is a woman's duty not to lower herself. You are lowering yourself. Mr Arrowpoint, will you tell your daughter what is her duty?"

"You must see, Catherine, that Klesmer is not the man for you," said Mr Arrowpoint. "He won't do at the head of estates. He has a deuced foreign look—is an unpractical man."

"I really can't see what that has to do with it, papa. The land of England has often passed into the hands of foreigners—Dutch soldiers, sons of foreign women of bad character:—if our land were sold to-morrow it would very likely pass into the hands of some foreign merchant on 'Change. It is in everybody's mouth that successful swindlers may buy up half the land in the country. How can I stem that tide?"

"It will never do to argue about marriage, Cath," said Mr Arrowpoint. "It's no use getting up the subject like a parliamentary question. We must do as other people do. We must think of the nation and the public good."

"I can't see any public good concerned here, papa," said Catherine. "Why is it to be expected of an heiress that she should carry the property gained in trade into the hands of a certain class? That seems to me a ridiculous mish-mash of superannuated customs and false ambition. I should call it a public evil. People had better make a new sort of public good by changing their ambitions."

"That is mere sophistry, Catherine," said Mrs Arrowpoint. "Because you don't wish to marry a nobleman, you are not obliged to marry a mountebank or a charlatan."

"I cannot understand the application of such words, mamma."

"No, I daresay not," rejoined Mrs Arrowpoint, with significant scorn. "You have got to a pitch at which we are not likely to understand each other."

"It can't be done, Cath," said Mr Arrowpoint, wishing to substitute a better-humoured reasoning for his wife's impetuosity. "A man like Klesmer can't marry such a property as yours. It can't be done."

"It certainly will not be done," said Mrs Arrowpoint, imperiously. "Where is the man? Let him be fetched."

"I cannot fetch him to be insulted," said Catherine. "Nothing will be achieved by that."

"I suppose you would wish him to know that in marrying you he will not marry your fortune," said Mrs Arrowpoint.

"Certainly; if it were so, I should wish him to know it."

"Then you had better fetch him."

Catherine only went into the music-room and said, "Come:" she felt no need to prepare Klesmer.

"Herr Klesmer," said Mrs Arrowpoint, with a rather contemptuous stateliness, "it is unnecessary

to repeat what has passed between us and our daughter. Mr Arrowpoint will tell you our resolution."

"Your marrying is quite out of the question," said Mr Arrowpoint, rather too heavily weighted with his task, and standing in an embarrassment unrelieved by a cigar. "It is a wild scheme altogether. A man has been called out for less."

"You have taken a base advantage of our confidence," burst in Mrs Arrowpoint, unable to carry out her purpose and leave the burthen of speech to her husband.

Klesmer made a low bow in silent irony.

"The pretension is ridiculous. You had better give it up and leave the house at once," continued Mr Arrowpoint. He wished to do without mentioning the money.

"I can give up nothing without reference to your daughter's wish," said Klesmer. "My engagement is to her."

"It is useless to discuss the question," said Mrs Arrowpoint. "We shall never consent to the marriage. If Catherine disobeys us we shall disinherit her. You will not marry her fortune. It is right you should know that."

"Madam, her fortune has been the only thing I have had to regret about her. But I must ask

her if she will not think the sacrifice greater than I am worthy of."

"It is no sacrifice to me," said Catherine, "except that I am sorry to hurt my father and mother. I have always felt my fortune to be a wretched fatality of my life."

"You mean to defy us, then?" said Mrs Arrowpoint.

"I mean to marry Herr Klesmer," said Catherine, firmly.

"He had better not count on our relenting," said Mrs Arrowpoint, whose manners suffered from that impunity in insult which has been reckoned among the privileges of women.

"Madam," said Klesmer, "certain reasons forbid me to retort. But understand that I consider it out of the power either of you or of your fortune to confer on me anything that I value. My rank as an artist is of my own winning, and I would not exchange it for any other. I am able to maintain your daughter, and I ask for no change in my life but her companionship."

"You will leave the house, however," said Mrs Arrowpoint.

"I go at once," said Klesmer, bowing and quitting the room.

"Let there be no misunderstanding, mamma,"

said Catherine; "I consider myself engaged to Herr Klesmer, and I intend to marry him."

The mother turned her head away and waved her hand in sign of dismissal.

"It's all very fine," said Mr Arrowpoint, when Catherine was gone; "but what the deuce are we to do with the property?"

"There is Harry Brendall. He can take the name."

"Harry Brendall will get through it all in no time," said Mr Arrowpoint, relighting his cigar.

And thus, with nothing settled but the determination of the lovers, Klesmer had left Quetcham.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Among the heirs of Art, as at the division of the promised land, each has to win his portion by hard fighting: the bestowal is after the manner of prophecy, and is a title without possession. To carry the map of an ungotten estate in your pocket is a poor sort of copyhold. And in fancy to cast his shoe over Edom is little warrant that a man shall ever set the sole of his foot on an acre of his own there.

The most obstinate beliefs that mortals entertain about themselves are such as they have no evidence for beyond a constant, spontaneous pulsing of their self-satisfaction—as it were a hidden seed of madness, a confidence that they can move the world without precise notion of standing-place or lever.

"PRAY go to church, mamma," said Gwendolen the next morning. "I prefer seeing Herr Klesmer alone." (He had written in reply to her note that he would be with her at eleven.)

"That is hardly correct, I think," said Mrs Davilow, anxiously.

"Our affairs are too serious for us to think of such nonsensical rules," said Gwendolen, contemptuously. "They are insulting as well as ridiculous."

"You would not mind Isabel sitting with you? She would be reading in a corner."

"No, she could not: she would bite her nails and stare. It would be too irritating. Trust my judgment, mamma. I must be alone. Take them all to church."

Gwendolen had her way, of course; only that Miss Merry and two of the girls stayed at home, to give the house a look of habitation by sitting at the dining-room windows.

It was a delicious Sunday morning. The melancholy waning sunshine of autumn rested on the leaf-strown grass and came mildly through the windows in slanting bands of brightness over the old furniture, and the glass panel that reflected the furniture; over the tapestried chairs with their faded flower-wreaths, the dark enigmatic pictures, the superannuated organ at which Gwendolen had pleased herself with acting Saint Cecilia on her first joyous arrival, the crowd of pallid, dusty knick-knacks seen through the open doors of the ante-chamber where she had achieved the wearing of her Greek dress as Hermione. This last memory was just now very busy in her; for had not Klesmer then been struck with admiration of her pose and expression? Whatever he had said, whatever she imagined him to have thought, was at this moment

pointed with keenest interest for her: perhaps she had never before in her life felt so inwardly dependent, so consciously in need of another person's opinion. There was a new fluttering of spirit within her, a new element of deliberation in her self-estimate which had hitherto been a blissful gift of intuition. Still it was the recurrent burthen of her inward soliloquy that Klesmer had seen but little of her, and any unfavourable conclusion of his must have too narrow a foundation. She really felt clever enough for anything.

To fill up the time she collected her volumes and pieces of music, and laying them on the top of the piano, set herself to classify them. Then catching the reflection of her movements in the glass panel, she was diverted to the contemplation of the image there and walked towards it. Dressed in black without a single ornament, and with the warm whiteness of her skin set off between her light-brown coronet of hair and her square-cut bodice, she might have tempted an artist to try again the Roman trick of a statue in black, white, and tawny marble. Seeing her image slowly advancing, she thought, "I *am* beautiful"—not exultingly, but with grave decision. Being beautiful was after all the condition on which she most needed external testimony. If any one objected

to the turn of her nose or the form of her neck and chin, she had not the sense that she could presently show her power of attainment in these branches of feminine perfection.

There was not much time to fill up in this way before the sound of wheels, the loud ring, and the opening doors, assured her that she was not by any accident to be disappointed. This slightly increased her inward flutter. In spite of her self-confidence, she dreaded Klesmer as part of that unmanageable world which was independent of her wishes—something vitriolic that would not cease to burn because you smiled or frowned at it. Poor thing! she was at a higher crisis of her woman's fate than in her past experience with Grandcourt. The questioning then, was whether she should take a particular man as a husband. The inmost fold of her questioning now, was whether she need take a husband at all—whether she could not achieve substantiality for herself and know gratified ambition without bondage.

Klesmer made his most deferential bow in the wide doorway of the ante-chamber—showing also the deference of the finest grey kerseymere trousers and perfect gloves (the 'masters of those who know' are happily altogether human). Gwendolen met him with unusual gravity, and holding out her

hand, said, "It is most kind of you to come, Herr Klesmer. I hope you have not thought me presumptuous."

"I took your wish as a command that did me honour," said Klesmer, with answering gravity. He was really putting by his own affairs in order to give his utmost attention to what Gwendolen might have to say; but his temperament was still in a state of excitation from the events of yesterday, likely enough to give his expressions a more than usually biting edge.

Gwendolen for once was under too great a strain of feeling to remember formalities. She continued standing near the piano, and Klesmer took his stand at the other end of it, with his back to the light and his terribly omniscient eyes upon her. No affectation was of use, and she began without delay.

"I wish to consult you, Herr Klesmer. We have lost all our fortune; we have nothing. I must get my own bread, and I desire to provide for my mamma, so as to save her from any hardship. The only way I can think of—and I should like it better than anything—is to be an actress —to go on the stage. But of course I should like to take a high position, and I thought—if you thought I could," — here Gwendolen became a

little more nervous,—"it would be better for me to be a singer—to study singing also."

Klesmer put down his hat on the piano, and folded his arms as if to concentrate himself.

"I know," Gwendolen resumed, turning from pale to pink and back again—"I know that my method of singing is very defective; but I have been ill taught. I could be better taught; I could study. And you will understand my wish:—to sing and act too, like Grisi, is a much higher position. Naturally, I should wish to take as high a rank as I can. And I can rely on your judgment. I am sure you will tell me the truth."

Gwendolen somehow had the conviction that now she made this serious appeal the truth would be favourable.

Still Klesmer did not speak. He drew off his gloves quickly, tossed them into his hat, rested his hands on his hips, and walked to the other end of the room. He was filled with compassion for this girl: he wanted to put a guard on his speech. When he turned again, he looked at her with a mild frown of inquiry, and said with gentle though quick utterance, "You have never seen anything, I think, of artists and their lives?—I mean of musicians, actors, artists of that kind?"

"Oh no," said Gwendolen, not perturbed by a

reference to this obvious fact in the history of a young lady hitherto well provided for.

"You are,—pardon me," said Klesmer, again pausing near the piano—"in coming to a conclusion on such a matter as this, everything must be taken into consideration,—you are perhaps twenty?"

"I am twenty-one," said Gwendolen, a slight fear rising in her. "Do you think I am too old?"

Klesmer pouted his under lip and shook his long fingers upward in a manner totally enigmatic.

"Many persons begin later than others," said Gwendolen, betrayed by her habitual consciousness of having valuable information to bestow.

Klesmer took no notice, but said with more studied gentleness than ever, "You have probably not thought of an artistic career until now: you did not entertain the notion, the longing—what shall I say?—you did not wish yourself an actress, or anything of that sort, till the present trouble?"

"Not exactly; but I was fond of acting. I have acted; you saw me, if you remember—you saw me here in charades, and as Hermione," said Gwendolen, really fearing that Klesmer had forgotten.

"Yes, yes," he answered quickly, "I remember —I remember perfectly," and again walked to the other end of the room. It was difficult for him to refrain from this kind of movement when he was in any argument either audible or silent.

Gwendolen felt that she was being weighed. The delay was unpleasant. But she did not yet conceive that the scale could dip on the wrong side, and it seemed to her only graceful to say, "I shall be very much obliged to you for taking the trouble to give me your advice, whatever it may be."

"Miss Harleth," said Klesmer, turning towards her and speaking with a slight increase of accent, "I will veil nothing from you in this matter. I should reckon myself guilty if I put a false visage on things—made them too black or too white. The gods have a curse for him who willingly tells another the wrong road. And if I misled one who is so young, so beautiful—who, I trust, will find her happiness along the right road, I should regard myself as a—*Bösewicht*." In the last word Klesmer's voice had dropped to a loud whisper.

Gwendolen felt a sinking of heart under this unexpected solemnity, and kept a sort of fascinated gaze on Klesmer's face, while he went on.

"You are a beautiful young lady—you have been brought up in ease—you have done what you would—you have not said to yourself, 'I must know this exactly,' 'I must understand this exactly,' 'I must do this exactly'"—in uttering these three terrible *musts*, Klesmer lifted up three long fingers in succession. "In sum, you have not been called upon to be anything but a charming young lady, whom it is an impoliteness to find fault with."

He paused an instant; then resting his fingers on his hips again, and thrusting out his powerful chin, he said—

"Well, then, with that preparation, you wish to try the life of the artist; you wish to try a life of arduous, unceasing work, and—uncertain praise. Your praise would have to be earned, like your bread; and both would come slowly, scantily—what do I say?—they might hardly come at all."

This tone of discouragement, which Klesmer half hoped might suffice without anything more unpleasant, roused some resistance in Gwendolen. With a slight turn of her head away from him, and an air of pique, she said—

"I thought that you, being an artist, would consider the life one of the most honourable and delightful. And if I can do nothing better?—I

suppose I can put up with the same risks as other people do."

"Do nothing better?" said Klesmer, a little fired. "No, my dear Miss Harleth, you could do nothing better—neither man nor woman could do anything better—if you could do what was best or good of its kind. I am not decrying the life of the true artist. I am exalting it. I say, it is out of the reach of any but choice organisations—natures framed to love perfection and to labour for it; ready, like all true lovers, to endure, to wait, to say, I am not yet worthy, but she—Art, my mistress—is worthy, and I will live to merit her. An honourable life? Yes. But the honour comes from the inward vocation and the hard-won achievement: there is no honour in donning the life as a livery."

Some excitement of yesterday had revived in Klesmer and hurried him into speech a little aloof from his immediate friendly purpose. He had wished as delicately as possible to rouse in Gwendolen a sense of her unfitness for a perilous, difficult course; but it was his wont to be angry with the pretensions of incompetence, and he was in danger of getting chafed. Conscious of this he paused suddenly. But Gwendolen's chief impression was that he had not yet denied her the power

of doing what would be good of its kind. Klesmer's fervour seemed to be a sort of glamour such as he was prone to throw over things in general; and what she desired to assure him of was that she was not afraid of some preliminary hardships. The belief that to present herself in public on the stage must produce an effect such as she had been used to feel certain of in private life, was like a bit of her flesh—it was not to be peeled off readily, but must come with blood and pain. She said, in a tone of some insistance—

"I am quite prepared to bear hardships at first. Of course no one can become celebrated all at once. And it is not necessary that every one should be first-rate—either actresses or singers. If you would be so kind as to tell me what steps I should take, I shall have the courage to take them. I don't mind going up hill. It will be easier than the dead level of being a governess. I will take any steps you recommend."

Klesmer was more convinced now that he must speak plainly.

"I will tell you the steps, not that I recommend, but that will be forced upon you. It is all one, so far, what your goal may be—excellence, celebrity, second, third rateness—it is all one. You must go to town under the protection of your mother.

You must put yourself under training—musical, dramatic, theatrical:—whatever you desire to do, you have to learn——" here Gwendolen looked as if she were going to speak, but Klesmer lifted up his hand and said decisively, "I know. You have exercised your talents—you recite—you sing—from the drawing-room *standpunkt*. My dear Fräulein, you must unlearn all that. You have not yet conceived what excellence is: you must unlearn your mistaken admirations. You must know what you have to strive for, and then you must subdue your mind and body to unbroken discipline. Your mind, I say. For you must not be thinking of celebrity:—put that candle out of your eyes, and look only at excellence. You would of course earn nothing—you could get no engagement for a long while. You would need money for yourself and your family. But that," here Klesmer frowned and shook his fingers as if to dismiss a triviality—"that could perhaps be found."

Gwendolen turned pink and pale during this speech. Her pride had felt a terrible knife-edge, and the last sentence only made the smart keener. She was conscious of appearing moved, and tried to escape from her weakness by suddenly walking to a seat and pointing out a chair to Klesmer.

He did not take it, but turned a little in order to face her and leaned against the piano. At that moment she wished that she had not sent for him: this first experience of being taken on some other ground than that of her social rank and her beauty was becoming bitter to her. Klesmer, preoccupied with a serious purpose, went on without change of tone.

"Now, what sort of issue might be fairly expected from all this self-denial? You would ask that. It is right that your eyes should be open to it. I will tell you truthfully. The issue would be uncertain and—most probably—would not be worth much."

At these relentless words Klesmer put out his lip and looked through his spectacles with the air of a monster impenetrable by beauty.

Gwendolen's eyes began to burn, but the dread of showing weakness urged her to added self-control. She compelled herself to say in a hard tone—

"You think I want talent, or am too old to begin."

Klesmer made a sort of hum and then descended on an emphatic "Yes! The desire and the training should have begun seven years ago—or a good deal earlier. A mountebank's child who helps her

father to earn shillings when she is six years old —a child that inherits a singing throat from a long line of choristers and learns to sing as it learns to talk, has a likelier beginning. Any great achievement in acting or in music grows with the growth. Whenever an artist has been able to say, 'I came, I saw, I conquered,' it has been at the end of patient practice. Genius at first is little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline. Singing and acting, like the fine dexterity of the juggler with his cups and balls, require a shaping of the organs towards a finer and finer certainty of effect. Your muscles—your whole frame—must go like a watch, true, true, true, to a hair. That is the work of spring-time, before habits have been determined."

"I did not pretend to genius," said Gwendolen, still feeling that she might somehow do what Klesmer wanted to represent as impossible. "I only supposed that I might have a little talent—enough to improve."

"I don't deny that," said Klesmer. "If you had been put in the right track some years ago and had worked well, you might now have made a public singer, though I don't think your voice would have counted for much in public. For the stage your personal charms and intelligence might

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then have told without the present drawback of inexperience—lack of discipline—lack of instruction."

Certainly Klesmer seemed cruel, but his feeling was the reverse of cruel. Our speech even when we are most single-minded can never take its line absolutely from one impulse; but Klesmer's was as far as possible directed by compassion for poor Gwendolen's ignorant eagerness to enter on a course of which he saw all the miserable details with a definiteness which he could not if he would have conveyed to her mind.

Gwendolen, however, was not convinced. Her self-opinion rallied, and since the counsellor whom she had called in gave a decision of such severe peremptoriness, she was tempted to think that his judgment was not only fallible but biassed. It occurred to her that a simpler and wiser step for her to have taken would have been to send a letter through the post to the manager of a London theatre, asking him to make an appointment. She would make no further reference to her singing: Klesmer, she saw, had set himself against her singing. But she felt equal to arguing with him about her going on the stage, and she answered in a resistant tone—

"I understand, of course, that no one can be a

finished actress at once. It may be impossible to tell beforehand whether I should succeed; but that seems to me a reason why I should try. I should have thought that I might have taken an engagement at a theatre meanwhile, so as to earn money and study at the same time."

"Can't be done, my dear Miss Harleth—I speak plainly—it can't be done. I must clear your mind of these notions, which have no more resemblance to reality than a pantomime. Ladies and gentlemen think that when they have made their toilet and drawn on their gloves they are as presentable on the stage as in a drawing-room. No manager thinks that. With all your grace and charm, if you were to present yourself as an aspirant to the stage, a manager would either require you to pay as an amateur for being allowed to perform, or he would tell you to go and be taught —trained to bear yourself on the stage, as a horse, however beautiful, must be trained for the circus; to say nothing of that study which would enable you to personate a character consistently, and animate it with the natural language of face, gesture, and tone. For you to get an engagement fit for you straight away is out of the question."

"I really cannot understand that," said Gwendolen, rather haughtily—then, checking herself,

she added in another tone—"I shall be obliged to you if you will explain how it is that such poor actresses get engaged. I have been to the theatre several times, and I am sure there were actresses who seemed to me to act not at all well and who were quite plain."

"Ah, my dear Miss Harleth, that is the easy criticism of the buyer. We who buy slippers toss away this pair and the other as clumsy; but there went an apprenticeship to the making of them. Excuse me: you could not at present teach one of those actresses; but there is certainly much that she could teach you. For example, she can pitch her voice so as to be heard: ten to one you could not do it till after many trials. Merely to stand and move on the stage is an art—requires practice. It is understood that we are not now talking of a *comparse* in a petty theatre who earns the wages of a needlewoman. That is out of the question for you."

"Of course I must earn more than that," said Gwendolen, with a sense of wincing rather than of being refuted; "but I think I could soon learn to do tolerably well all those little things you have mentioned. I am not so very stupid. And even in Paris I am sure I saw two actresses playing important ladies' parts who were not at all ladies and quite ugly. I suppose I have no par-

ticular talent, but I *must* think it is an advantage, even on the stage, to be a lady and not a perfect fright."

"Ah, let us understand each other," said Klesmer, with a flash of new meaning. "I was speaking of what you would have to go through if you aimed at becoming a real artist—if you took music and the drama as a higher vocation in which you would strive after excellence. On that head, what I have said stands fast. You would find—after your education in doing things slackly for one-and-twenty years—great difficulties in study: you would find mortifications in the treatment you would get when you presented yourself on the footing of skill. You would be subjected to tests; people would no longer feign not to see your blunders. You would at first only be accepted on trial. You would have to bear what I may call a glaring insignificance: any success must be won by the utmost patience. You would have to keep your place in a crowd, and after all it is likely you would lose it and get out of sight. If you determine to face these hardships and still try, you will have the dignity of a high purpose, even though you may have chosen unfortunately. You will have some merit, though you may win no prize. You have asked my judgment on your chances of winning. I don't pretend to speak ab-

solutely; but measuring probabilities, my judgment is:—you will hardly achieve more than mediocrity."

Klesmer had delivered himself with emphatic rapidity, and now paused a moment. Gwendolen was motionless, looking at her hands, which lay over each other on her lap, till the deep-toned, long-drawn "*But,*" with which he resumed, had a startling effect, and made her look at him again.

"But—there are certainly other ideas, other dispositions with which a young lady may take up an art that will bring her before the public. She may rely on the unquestioned power of her beauty as a passport. She may desire to exhibit herself to an admiration which dispenses with skill. This goes a certain way on the stage: not in music: but on the stage, beauty is taken when there is nothing more commanding to be had. Not without some drilling, however: as I have said before, technicalities have in any case to be mastered. But these excepted, we have here nothing to do with art. The woman who takes up this career is not an artist: she is usually one who thinks of entering on a luxurious life by a short and easy road—perhaps by marriage—that is her most brilliant chance, and the rarest. Still, her career

will not be luxurious to begin with: she can hardly earn her own poor bread independently at once, and the indignities she will be liable to are such as I will not speak of."

"I desire to be independent," said Gwendolen, deeply stung and confusedly apprehending some scorn for herself in Klesmer's words. "That was my reason for asking whether I could not get an immediate engagement. Of course I cannot know how things go on about theatres. But I thought that I could have made myself independent. I have no money, and I will not accept help from any one."

Her wounded pride could not rest without making this disclaimer. It was intolerable to her that Klesmer should imagine her to have expected other help from him than advice.

"That is a hard saying for your friends," said Klesmer, recovering the gentleness of tone with which he had begun the conversation. "I have given you pain. That was inevitable. I was bound to put the truth, the unvarnished truth before you. I have not said—I will not say—you will do wrong to choose the hard, climbing path of an endeavouring artist. You have to compare its difficulties with those of any less hazardous —any more private course which opens itself

to you. If you take that more courageous resolve I will ask leave to shake hands with you on the strength of our freemasonry, where we are all vowed to the service of Art, and to serve her by helping every fellow-servant."

Gwendolen was silent, again looking at her hands. She felt herself very far away from taking the resolve that would enforce acceptance; and after waiting an instant or two, Klesmer went on with deepened seriousness.

"Where there is the duty of service there must be the duty of accepting it. The question is not one of personal obligation. And in relation to practical matters immediately affecting your future —excuse my permitting myself to mention in confidence an affair of my own. I am expecting an event which would make it easy for me to exert myself on your behalf in furthering your opportunities of instruction and residence in London—under the care, that is, of your family—without need for anxiety on your part. If you resolve to take art as a bread-study, you need only undertake the study at first; the bread will be found without trouble. The event I mean is my marriage, —in fact—you will receive this as a matter of confidence,—my marriage with Miss Arrowpoint, which will more than double such right as I have to be

trusted by you as a friend. Your friendship will have greatly risen in value for *her* by your having adopted that generous labour."

Gwendolen's face had begun to burn. That Klesmer was about to marry Miss Arrowpoint caused her no surprise, and at another moment she would have amused herself in quickly imagining the scenes that must have occurred at Quetcham. But what engrossed her feeling, what filled her imagination now, was the panorama of her own immediate future that Klesmer's words seemed to have unfolded. The suggestion of Miss Arrowpoint as a patroness was only another detail added to its repulsiveness: Klesmer's proposal to help her seemed an additional irritation after the humiliating judgment he had passed on her capabilities. His words had really bitten into her self-confidence and turned it into the pain of a bleeding wound; and the idea of presenting herself before other judges was now poisoned with the dread that they also might be harsh: they also would not recognise the talent she was conscious of. But she controlled herself, and rose from her seat before she made any answer. It seemed natural that she should pause. She went to the piano and looked absently at leaves of music, pinching up the corners. At

last she turned towards Klesmer and said, with almost her usual air of proud equality, which in this interview had not been hitherto perceptible—

"I congratulate you sincerely, Herr Klesmer. I think I never saw any one more admirable than Miss Arrowpoint. And I have to thank you for every sort of kindness this morning. But I can't decide now. If I make the resolve you have spoken of, I will use your permission—I will let you know. But I fear the obstacles are too great. In any case, I am deeply obliged to you. It was very bold of me to ask you to take this trouble."

Klesmer's inward remark was, "She will never let me know." But with the most thorough respect in his manner, he said, "Command me at any time. There is an address on this card which will always find me with little delay."

When he had taken up his hat and was going to make his bow, Gwendolen's better self, conscious of an ingratitude which the clear-seeing Klesmer must have penetrated, made a desperate effort to find its way above the stifling layers of egoistic disappointment and irritation. Looking at him with a glance of the old gaiety, she put out her hand, and said with a smile, "If I take the wrong road, it will not be because of your flattery."

"God forbid that you should take any road but one where you will find and give happiness!" said Klesmer, fervently. Then, in foreign fashion, he touched her fingers lightly with his lips, and in another minute she heard the sound of his departing wheels getting more distant on the gravel.

Gwendolen had never in her life felt so miserable. No sob came, no passion of tears, to relieve her. Her eyes were burning; and the noonday only brought into more dreary clearness the absence of interest from her life. All memories, all objects, the pieces of music displayed, the open piano—the very reflection of herself in the glass—seemed no better than the packed-up shows of a departing fair. For the first time since her consciousness began, she was having a vision of herself on the common level, and had lost the innate sense that there were reasons why she should not be slighted, elbowed, jostled—treated like a passenger with a third-class ticket, in spite of private objections on her own part. She did not move about; the prospects begotten by disappointment were too oppressively preoccupying; she threw herself into the shadiest corner of a settee, and pressed her fingers over her burning eyelids. Every word that Klesmer had said seemed to have been branded into her memory,

as most words are which bring with them a new set of impressions and make an epoch for us. Only a few hours before, the dawning smile of self-contentment rested on her lips as she vaguely imagined a future suited to her wishes: it seemed but the affair of a year or so for her to become the most approved Juliet of the time; or, if Klesmer encouraged her idea of being a singer, to proceed by more gradual steps to her place in the opera, while she won money and applause by occasional performances. Why not? At home, at school, among acquaintances, she had been used to have her conscious superiority admitted; and she had moved in a society where everything, from low arithmetic to high art, is of the amateur kind politely supposed to fall short of perfection only because gentlemen and ladies are not obliged to do more than they like—otherwise they would probably give forth abler writings and show themselves more commanding artists than any the world is at present obliged to put up with. The self-confident visions that had beguiled her were not of a highly exceptional kind; and she had at least shown some rationality in consulting the person who knew the most and had flattered her the least. In asking Klesmer's advice, however, she had rather been borne up by a belief in his

latent admiration than bent on knowing anything more unfavourable that might have lain behind his slight objections to her singing; and the truth she had asked for with an expectation that it would be agreeable, had come like a lacerating thong.

"Too old—should have begun seven years ago —you will not, at best, achieve more than mediocrity—hard, incessant work, uncertain praise—bread coming slowly, scantily, perhaps not at all —mortifications, people no longer feigning not to see your blunders—glaring insignificance"—all these phrases rankled in her; and even more galling was the hint that she could only be accepted on the stage as a beauty who hoped to get a husband. The "indignities" that she might be visited with had no very definite form for her, but the mere association of anything called "indignity" with herself, roused a resentful alarm. And along with the vaguer images which were raised by those biting words, came the more precise conception of disagreeables which her experience enabled her to imagine. How could she take her mamma and the four sisters to London, if it were not possible for her to earn money at once? And as for submitting to be a *protégée*, and asking her mamma to submit with her to the humiliation of

being supported by Miss Arrowpoint—that was as bad as being a governess; nay, worse; for suppose the end of all her study to be as worthless as Klesmer clearly expected it to be, the sense of favours received and never repaid, would embitter the miseries of disappointment. Klesmer doubtless had magnificent ideas about helping artists; but how could he know the feelings of ladies in such matters? It was all over: she had entertained a mistaken hope; and there was an end of it.

"An end of it!" said Gwendolen, aloud, starting from her seat as she heard the steps and voices of her mamma and sisters coming in from church. She hurried to the piano and began gathering together her pieces of music with assumed diligence, while the expression on her pale face and in her burning eyes was what would have suited a woman enduring a wrong which she might not resent, but would probably revenge.

"Well, my darling," said gentle Mrs Davilow, entering, "I see by the wheel-marks that Klesmer has been here. Have you been satisfied with the interview?" She had some guesses as to its object, but felt timid about implying them.

"Satisfied, mamma? oh yes," said Gwendolen, in a high hard tone, for which she must be excused, because she dreaded a scene of emotion.

If she did not set herself resolutely to feign proud indifference, she felt that she must fall into a passionate outburst of despair, which would cut her mamma more deeply than all the rest of their calamities.

"Your uncle and aunt were disappointed at not seeing you," said Mrs Davilow, coming near the piano, and watching Gwendolen's movements. I only said that you wanted rest."

"Quite right, mamma," said Gwendolen, in the same tone, turning to put away some music.

"Am I not to know anything now, Gwendolen? Am I always to be in the dark?" said Mrs Davilow, too keenly sensitive to her daughter's manner and expression not to fear that something painful had occurred.

"There is really nothing to tell now, mamma," said Gwendolen, in a still higher voice. "I had a mistaken idea about something I could do. Herr Klesmer has undeceived me. That is all."

"Don't look and speak in that way, my dear child: I cannot bear it," said Mrs Davilow, breaking down. She felt an undefinable terror.

Gwendolen looked at her a moment in silence, biting her inner lip; then she went up to her, and putting her hands on her mamma's shoulders, said with a drop of her voice to the lowest under-

tone, "Mamma, don't speak to me now. It is useless to cry and waste our strength over what can't be altered. You will live at Sawyer's Cottage, and I am going to the bishop's daughters. There is no more to be said. Things cannot be altered, and who cares? It makes no difference to any one else what we do. We must try not to care ourselves. We must not give way. I dread giving way. Help me to be quiet."

Mrs Davilow was like a frightened child under her daughter's face and voice: her tears were arrested and she went away in silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I question things and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind."
—WORDSWORTH.

GWENDOLEN was glad that she had got through her interview with Klesmer before meeting her uncle and aunt. She had made up her mind now that there were only disagreeables before her, and she felt able to maintain a dogged calm in the face of any humiliation that might be proposed.

The meeting did not happen until the Monday, when Gwendolen went to the rectory with her mamma. They had called at Sawyer's Cottage by the way, and had seen every cranny of the narrow rooms in a mid-day light unsoftened by blinds and curtains; for the furnishing to be done by gleanings from the rectory had not yet begun.

"How *shall* you endure it, mamma?" said Gwendolen, as they walked away. She had not

opened her lips while they were looking round at the bare walls and floors, and the little garden with the cabbage-stalks, and the yew arbour all dust and cobwebs within. "You and the four girls all in that closet of a room, with the green and yellow paper pressing on your eyes? And without me?"

"It will be some comfort that you have not to bear it too, dear."

"If it were not that I must get some money, I would rather be there than go to be a governess."

"Don't set yourself against it beforehand, Gwendolen. If you go to the palace you will have every luxury about you. And you know how much you have always cared for that. You will not find it so hard as going up and down those steep narrow stairs, and hearing the crockery rattle through the house, and the dear girls talking."

"It is like a bad dream," said Gwendolen, impetuously. "I cannot believe that my uncle will let you go to such a place. He ought to have taken some other steps."

"Don't be unreasonable, dear child. What could he have done?"

"That was for him to find out. It seems to me a very extraordinary world if people in our posi-

tion must sink in this way all at once," said Gwendolen, the other worlds with which she was conversant being constructed with a sense of fitness that arranged her own future agreeably.

It was her temper that framed her sentences under this entirely new pressure of evils: she could have spoken more suitably on the vicissitudes in other people's lives, though it was never her aspiration to express herself virtuously so much as cleverly—a point to be remembered in extenuation of her words, which were usually worse than she was.

And, notwithstanding the keen sense of her own bruises, she was capable of some compunction when her uncle and aunt received her with a more affectionate kindness than they had ever shown before. She could not but be struck by the dignified cheerfulness with which they talked of the necessary economies in their way of living, and in the education of the boys. Mr Gascoigne's worth of character, a little obscured by worldly opportunities—as the poetic beauty of women is obscured by the demands of fashionable dressing—showed itself to great advantage under this sudden reduction of fortune. Prompt and methodical, he had set himself not only to put down his carriage, but to reconsider his worn suits of

clothes, to leave off meat for breakfast, to do without periodicals, to get Edwy from school and arrange hours of study for all the boys under himself, and to order the whole establishment on the sparest footing possible. For all healthy people economy has its pleasures; and the Rector's spirit had spread through the household. Mrs Gascoigne and Anna, who always made papa their model, really did not miss anything they cared about for themselves, and in all sincerity felt that the saddest part of the family losses was the change for Mrs Davilow and her children.

Anna for the first time could merge her resentment on behalf of Rex in her sympathy with Gwendolen; and Mrs Gascoigne was disposed to hope that trouble would have a salutary effect on her niece, without thinking it her duty to add any bitters by way of increasing the salutariness. They had both been busy devising how to get blinds and curtains for the cottage out of the household stores; but with delicate feeling they left these matters in the background, and talked at first of Gwendolen's journey, and the comfort it was to her mamma to have her at home again.

In fact there was nothing for Gwendolen to take as a justification for extending her discontent with events to the persons immediately around

her, and she felt shaken into a more alert attention, as if by a call to drill that everybody else was obeying, when her uncle began in a voice of firm kindness to talk to her of the efforts he had been making to get her a situation which would offer her as many advantages as possible. Mr Gascoigne had not forgotten Grandcourt, but the possibility of further advances from that quarter was something too vague for a man of his good sense to be determined by it: uncertainties of that kind must not now slacken his action in doing the best he could for his niece under actual conditions.

"I felt that there was no time to be lost, Gwendolen;—for a position in a good family where you will have some consideration is not to be had at a moment's notice. And however long we waited we could hardly find one where you would be better off than at Bishop Mompert's. I am known to both him and Mrs Mompert, and that of course is an advantage for you. Our correspondence has gone on favourably; but I cannot be surprised that Mrs Mompert wishes to see you before making an absolute engagement. She thinks of arranging for you to meet her at Wancester when she is on her way to town. I daresay you will feel the interview rather trying for you, my dear; but you will have a little time to prepare your mind."

"Do you know *why* she wants to see me, uncle?" said Gwendolen, whose mind had quickly gone over various reasons that an imaginary Mrs Mompert with three daughters might be supposed to entertain, reasons all of a disagreeable kind to the person presenting herself for inspection.

The Rector smiled. "Don't be alarmed, my dear. She would like to have a more precise idea of you than my report can give. And a mother is naturally scrupulous about a companion for her daughters. I have told her you are very young. But she herself exercises a close supervision over her daughters' education, and that makes her less anxious as to age. She is a woman of taste and also of strict principle, and objects to having a French person in the house. I feel sure that she will think your manners and accomplishments as good as she is likely to find; and over the religious and moral tone of the education she, and indeed the bishop himself, will preside."

Gwendolen dared not answer, but the repression of her decided dislike to the whole prospect sent an unusually deep flush over her face and neck, subsiding as quickly as it came. Anna, full of tender fears, put her little hand into her cousin's, and Mr Gascoigne was too kind a man not to conceive something of the trial which this sudden change

must be for a girl like Gwendolen. Bent on giving a cheerful view of things, he went on in an easy tone of remark, not as if answering supposed objections—

"I think so highly of the position, that I should have been tempted to try and get it for Anna, if she had been at all likely to meet Mrs Mompert's wants. It is really a home, with a continuance of education in the highest sense: 'governess' is a misnomer. The bishop's views are of a more decidedly Low Church colour than my own—he is a close friend of Lord Grampian's; but though privately strict, he is not by any means narrow in public matters. Indeed, he has created as little dislike in his diocese as any bishop on the bench. He has always remained friendly to me, though before his promotion, when he was an incumbent of this diocese, we had a little controversy about the Bible Society."

The Rector's words were too pregnant with satisfactory meaning to himself for him to imagine the effect they produced in the mind of his niece. "Continuance of education"—"bishop's views"—"privately strict"—"Bible Society,"—it was as if he had introduced a few snakes at large for the instruction of ladies who regarded them as all alike furnished with poison-bags, and biting or

stinging according to convenience. To Gwendolen, already shrinking from the prospect opened to her, such phrases came like the growing heat of a burning-glass — not at all as the links of persuasive reflection which they formed for the good uncle. She began desperately to seek an alternative.

"There was another situation, I think, mamma spoke of?" she said, with determined self-mastery.

"Yes," said the Rector, in rather a depreciatory tone; "but that is in a school. I should not have the same satisfaction in your taking that. It would be much harder work, you are aware, and not so good in any other respect. Besides, you have not an equal chance of getting it."

"Oh dear no," said Mrs Gascoigne, "it would be much harder for you, my dear — much less appropriate. You might not have a bedroom to yourself." And Gwendolen's memories of school suggested other particulars which forced her to admit to herself that this alternative would be no relief. She turned to her uncle again and said, apparently in acceptance of his ideas—

"When is Mrs Mompert likely to send for me?"

"That is rather uncertain, but she has promised not to entertain any other proposal till she has

seen you. She has entered with much feeling into your position. It will be within the next fortnight, probably. But I must be off now. I am going to let part of my glebe uncommonly well."

The Rector ended very cheerfully, leaving the room with the satisfactory conviction that Gwendolen was going to adapt herself to circumstances like a girl of good sense. Having spoken appropriately, he naturally supposed that the effects would be appropriate; being accustomed as a household and parish authority to be asked to "speak to" refractory persons, with the understanding that the measure was morally coercive.

"What a stay Henry is to us all!" said Mrs Gascoigne, when her husband had left the room.

"He is indeed," said Mrs Davilow, cordially. "I think cheerfulness is a fortune in itself. I wish I had it."

"And Rex is just like him," said Mrs Gascoigne. "I must tell you the comfort we have had in a letter from him. I must read you a little bit," she added, taking the letter from her pocket, while Anna looked rather frightened—she did not know why, except that it had been a rule with her not to mention Rex before Gwendolen.

The proud mother ran her eyes over the letter, seeking for sentences to read aloud. But ap-

parently she had found it sown with what might seem to be closer allusions than she desired to the recent past, for she looked up, folding the letter, and saying—

"However, he tells us that our trouble has made a man of him; he sees a reason for any amount of work: he means to get a fellowship, to take pupils, to set one of his brothers going, to be everything that is most remarkable. The letter is full of fun—just like him. He says, 'Tell mother she has put out an advertisement for a jolly good hard-working son, in time to hinder me from taking ship; and I offer myself for the place.' The letter came on Friday. I never saw my husband so much moved by anything since Rex was born. It seemed a gain to balance our loss."

This letter, in fact, was what had helped both Mrs Gascoigne and Anna to show Gwendolen an unmixed kindliness; and she herself felt very amiably about it, smiling at Anna and pinching her chin as much as to say, "Nothing is wrong with you now, is it?" She had no gratuitously ill-natured feeling, or egoistic pleasure in making men miserable. She only had an intense objection to their making her miserable.

But when the talk turned on furniture for the cottage, Gwendolen was not roused to show even

a languid interest. She thought that she had done as much as could be expected of her this morning, and indeed felt at an heroic pitch in keeping to herself the struggle that was going on within her. The recoil of her mind from the only definite prospect allowed her, was stronger than even she had imagined beforehand. The idea of presenting herself before Mrs Mompert in the first instance, to be approved or disapproved, came as pressure on an already painful bruise: even as a governess, it appeared, she was to be tested and was liable to rejection. After she had done herself the violence to accept the bishop and his wife, they were still to consider whether they would accept her; it was at her peril that she was to look, speak, or be silent. And even when she had entered on her dismal task of self-constraint in the society of three girls whom she was bound incessantly to edify, the same process of inspection was to go on: there was always to be Mrs Mompert's supervision; always something or other would be expected of her to which she had not the slightest inclination; and perhaps the bishop would examine her on serious topics. Gwendolen, lately used to the social successes of a handsome girl, whose lively venturesomeness of talk has the effect of wit, and who six weeks be-

fore would have pitied the dulness of the bishop rather than have been embarrassed by him, saw the life before her as an entrance into a penitentiary. Wild thoughts of running away to be an actress, in spite of Klesmer, came to her with the lure of freedom; but his words still hung heavily on her soul; they had alarmed her pride and even her maidenly dignity: dimly she conceived herself getting amongst vulgar people who would treat her with rude familiarity — odious men whose grins and smirks would not be seen through the strong grating of polite society. Gwendolen's daring was not in the least that of the adventuress; the demand to be held a lady was in her very marrow; and when she had dreamed that she might be the heroine of the gaming-table, it was with the understanding that no one should treat her with the less consideration, or presume to look at her with irony as Deronda had done. To be protected and petted, and to have her susceptibilities consulted in every detail, had gone along with her food and clothing as matters of course in her life: even without any such warning as Klesmer's she could not have thought it an attractive freedom to be thrown in solitary dependence on the doubtful civility of strangers. The endurance of the episcopal penitentiary was less repulsive

than that; though here too she would certainly never be petted or have her susceptibilities consulted. Her rebellion against this hard necessity which had come just to her of all people in the world—to her whom all circumstances had concurred in preparing for something quite different —was exaggerated instead of diminished as one hour followed another, filled with the imagination of what she might have expected in her lot and what it was actually to be. The family troubles, she thought, were easier for every one than for her — even for poor dear mamma, because she had always used herself to not enjoying. As to hoping that if she went to the Momperts' and was patient a little while, things might get better—it would be stupid to entertain hopes for herself after all that had happened: her talents, it appeared, would never be recognised as anything remarkable, and there was not a single direction in which probability seemed to flatter her wishes. Some beautiful girls who, like her, had read romances where even plain governesses are centres of attraction and are sought in marriage, might have solaced themselves a little by transporting such pictures into their own future; but even if Gwendolen's experience had led her to dwell on love-making and marriage as her elysium, her heart

was too much oppressed by what was near to her, in both the past and the future, for her to project her anticipations very far off. She had a world-nausea upon her, and saw no reason all through her life why she should wish to live. No religious view of trouble helped her: her troubles had in her opinion all been caused by other people's disagreeable or wicked conduct; and there was really nothing pleasant to be counted on in the world: that was her feeling; everything else she had heard said about trouble was mere phrase-making not attractive enough for her to have caught it up and repeated it. As to the sweetness of labour and fulfilled claims; the interest of inward and outward activity; the impersonal delights of life as a perpetual discovery; the dues of courage, fortitude, industry, which it is mere baseness not to pay towards the common burthen; the supreme worth of the teacher's vocation;—these, even if they had been eloquently preached to her, could have been no more than faintly apprehended doctrines: the fact which wrought upon her was her invariable observation that for a lady to become a governess—to "take a situation"—was to descend in life and to be treated at best with a compassionate patronage. And poor Gwendolen had never dissociated happiness from

personal pre-eminence and *éclat.* That where these threatened to forsake her, she should take life to be hardly worth the having, cannot make her so unlike the rest of us, men or women, that we should cast her out of our compassion; our moments of temptation to a mean opinion of things in general being usually dependent on some susceptibility about ourselves and some dulness to subjects which every one else would consider more important. Surely a young creature is pitiable who has the labyrinth of life before her and no clue—to whom distrust in herself and her good fortune has come as a sudden shock, like a rent across the path that she was treading carelessly.

In spite of her healthy frame, her irreconcilable repugnance affected her even physically: she felt a sort of numbness and could set about nothing; the least urgency, even that she should take her meals, was an irritation to her; the speech of others on any subject seemed unreasonable, because it did not include her feeling and was an ignorant claim on her. It was not in her nature to busy herself with the fancies of suicide to which disappointed young people are prone: what occupied and exasperated her was the sense that there was nothing for her but to live in a way she

hated. She avoided going to the rectory again: it was too intolerable to have to look and talk as if she were compliant; and she could not exert herself to show interest about the furniture of that horrible cottage. Miss Merry was staying on purpose to help, and such people as Jocosa liked that sort of thing. Her mother had to make excuses for her not appearing, even when Anna came to see her. For that calm which Gwendolen had promised herself to maintain had changed into sick motivelessness: she thought, "I suppose I shall begin to pretend by-and-by, but why should I do it now?"

Her mother watched her with silent distress; and, lapsing into the habit of indulgent tenderness, she began to think what she imagined that Gwendolen was thinking, and to wish that everything should give way to the possibility of making her darling less miserable.

One day when she was in the black and yellow bedroom and her mother was lingering there under the pretext of considering and arranging Gwendolen's articles of dress, she suddenly roused herself to fetch the casket which contained her ornaments.

"Mamma," she began, glancing over the upper layer, "I had forgotten these things. Why didn't

you remind me of them? Do see about getting them sold. You will not mind about parting with them. You gave them all to me long ago."

She lifted the upper tray and looked below.

"If we can do without them, darling, I would rather keep them for you," said Mrs Davilow, seating herself beside Gwendolen with a feeling of relief that she was beginning to talk about something. The usual relation between them had become reversed. It was now the mother who tried to cheer the daughter. "Why, how came you to put that pocket-handkerchief in here?"

It was the handkerchief with the corner torn off which Gwendolen had thrust in with the turquoise necklace.

"It happened to be with the necklace—I was in a hurry," said Gwendolen, taking the handkerchief away and putting it in her pocket. "Don't sell the necklace, mamma," she added, a new feeling having come over her about that rescue of it which had formerly been so offensive.

"No, dear, no; it was made out of your dear father's chain. And I should prefer not selling the other things. None of them are of any great value. All my best ornaments were taken from me long ago."

Mrs Davilow coloured. She usually avoided any

reference to such facts about Gwendolen's step-father as that he had carried off his wife's jewellery and disposed of it. After a moment's pause she went on—

"And these things have not been reckoned on for any expenses. Carry them with you."

"That would be quite useless, mamma," said Gwendolen, coldly. "Governesses don't wear ornaments. You had better get me a grey frieze livery and a straw poke, such as my aunt's charity children wear."

"No, dear, no; don't take that view of it. I feel sure the Momperts will like you the better for being graceful and elegant."

"I am not at all sure what the Momperts will like me to be. It is enough that I am expected to be what they like," said Gwendolen, bitterly.

"If there is anything you would object to less —anything that could be done—instead of your going to the bishop's, do say so, Gwendolen. Tell me what is in your heart. I will try for anything you wish," said the mother, beseechingly. "Don't keep things away from me. Let us bear them together."

"Oh mamma, there is nothing to tell. I can't do anything better. I must think myself fortunate if they will have me. I shall get some money for

you. That is the only thing I have to think of. I shall not spend any money this year: you will have all the eighty pounds. I don't know how far that will go in housekeeping; but you need not stitch your poor fingers to the bone, and stare away all the sight that the tears have left in your dear eyes."

Gwendolen did not give any caresses with her words as she had been used to do. She did not even look at her mother, but was looking at the turquoise necklace as she turned it over her fingers.

"Bless you for your tenderness, my good darling!" said Mrs Davilow, with tears in her eyes. "Don't despair because there are clouds now. You are so young. There may be great happiness in store for you yet."

"I don't see any reason for expecting it, mamma," said Gwendolen, in a hard tone; and Mrs Davilow was silent, thinking as she had often thought before—"What did happen between her and Mr Grandcourt?"

"I *will* keep this necklace, mamma," said Gwendolen, laying it apart and then closing the casket. "But do get the other things sold even if they will not bring much. Ask my uncle what to do with them. I shall certainly not use them again.

I am going to take the veil. I wonder if all the poor wretches who have ever taken it felt as I do."

"Don't exaggerate evils, dear."

"How can any one know that I exaggerate, when I am speaking of my own feeling? I did not say what any one else felt."

She took out the torn handkerchief from her pocket again, and wrapt it deliberately round the necklace. Mrs Davilow observed the action with some surprise, but the tone of the last words discouraged her from asking any question.

The "feeling" Gwendolen spoke of with an air of tragedy was not to be explained by the mere fact that she was going to be a governess: she was possessed by a spirit of general disappointment. It was not simply that she had a distaste for what she was called on to do: the distaste spread itself over the world outside her penitentiary, since she saw nothing very pleasant in it that seemed attainable by her even if she were free. Naturally her grievances did not seem to her smaller than some of her male contemporaries held theirs to be when they felt a profession too narrow for their powers, and had an *à priori* conviction that it was not worth while to put forth their latent abilities. Because her education had been less expensive than theirs it did not follow that

she should have wider emotions or a keener intellectual vision. Her griefs were feminine; but to her as a woman they were not the less hard to bear, and she felt an equal right to the Promethean tone.

But the movement of mind which led her to keep the necklace, to fold it up in the handkerchief, and rise to put it in her *nécessaire*, where she had first placed it when it had been returned to her, was more peculiar, and what would be called less reasonable. It came from that streak of superstition in her which attached itself both to her confidence and her terror—a superstition which lingers in an intense personality even in spite of theory and science; any dread or hope for self being stronger than all reasons for or against it. Why she should suddenly determine not to part with the necklace was not much clearer to her than why she should sometimes have been frightened to find herself in the fields alone: she had a confused state of emotion about Deronda—was it wounded pride and resentment, or a certain awe and exceptional trust? It was something vague and yet mastering, which impelled her to this action about the necklace. There is a great deal of unmapped country within us which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms.

CHAPTER XXV.

How trace the why and wherefore in a mind reduced to the barrenness of a fastidious egoism, in which all direct desires are dulled, and have dwindled from motives into a vacillating expectation of motives : a mind made up of moods, where a fitful impulse springs here and there conspicuously rank amid the general weediness ? 'Tis a condition apt to befall a life too much at large, unmoulded by the pressure of obligation. *Nam deteriores omnes sumus licentiæ*, saith Terence ; or, as a more familiar tongue might deliver it, *' As you like ' is a bad finger-post.*

POTENTATES make known their intentions and affect the funds at a small expense of words. So, when Grandcourt, after learning that Gwendolen had left Leubronn, incidentally pronounced that resort of fashion a beastly hole worse than Baden, the remark was conclusive to Mr Lush that his patron intended straightway to return to Diplow. The execution was sure to be slower than the intention, and in fact Grandcourt did loiter through the next day without giving any distinct orders about departure—perhaps because he discerned that Lush was expecting them : he lingered over his toilet, and certainly came down with a faded

aspect of perfect distinction which made fresh complexions, and hands with the blood in them, seem signs of raw vulgarity; he lingered on the terrace, in the gambling-rooms, in the reading-room, occupying himself in being indifferent to everybody and everything around him. When he met Lady Mallinger, however, he took some trouble—raised his hat, paused, and proved that he listened to her recommendation of the waters by replying, "Yes; I heard somebody say how providential it was that there always happened to be springs at gambling places."

"Oh, that was a joke," said innocent Lady Mallinger, misled by Grandcourt's languid seriousness, "in imitation of the old one about the towns and the rivers, you know."

"Ah, perhaps," said Grandcourt, without change of expression. Lady Mallinger thought this worth telling to Sir Hugo, who said, "Oh my dear, he is not a fool. You must not suppose that he can't see a joke. He can play his cards as well as most of us."

"He has never seemed to me a very sensible man," said Lady Mallinger, in excuse of herself. She had a secret objection to meeting Grandcourt, who was little else to her than a large living sign of what she felt to be her failure as a wife—the

not having presented Sir Hugo with a son. Her constant reflection was that her husband might fairly regret his choice, and if he had not been very good might have treated her with some roughness in consequence, gentlemen naturally disliking to be disappointed.

Deronda, too, had a recognition from Grandcourt, for which he was not grateful, though he took care to return it with perfect civility. No reasoning as to the foundations of custom could do away with the early-rooted feeling that his birth had been attended with injury for which his father was to blame; and seeing that but for this injury Grandcourt's prospect might have been his, he was proudly resolute not to behave in any way that might be interpreted into irritation on that score. He saw a very easy descent into mean unreasoning rancour and triumph in others' frustration; and being determined not to go down that ugly pit, he turned his back on it, clinging to the kindlier affections within him as a possession. Pride certainly helped him well—the pride of not recognising a disadvantage for one's self which vulgar minds are disposed to exaggerate, such as the shabby equipage of poverty: he would not have a man like Grandcourt suppose himself envied by him. But there is no guarding against

interpretation. Grandcourt did believe that Deronda, poor devil, who he had no doubt was his cousin by the father's side, inwardly winced under their mutual position; wherefore the presence of that less lucky person was more agreeable to him than it would otherwise have been. An imaginary envy, the idea that others feel their comparative deficiency, is the ordinary *cortège* of egoism; and his pet dogs were not the only beings that Grandcourt liked to feel his power over in making them jealous. Hence he was civil enough to exchange several words with Deronda on the terrace about the hunting round Diplow, and even said, "You had better come over for a run or two when the season begins."

Lush, not displeased with delay, amused himself very well, partly in gossiping with Sir Hugo and in answering his questions about Grandcourt's affairs so far as they might affect his willingness to part with his interest in Diplow. Also about Grandcourt's personal entanglements, the baronet knew enough already for Lush to feel released from silence on a sunny autumn day, when there was nothing more agreeable to do in lounging promenades than to speak freely of a tyrannous patron behind his back. Sir Hugo willingly inclined his ear to a little good-humoured scandal,

which he was fond of calling *traits de mœurs;* but he was strict in keeping such communications from hearers who might take them too seriously. Whatever knowledge he had of his nephew's secrets, he had never spoken of it to Deronda, who considered Grandcourt a pale-blooded mortal, but was far from wishing to hear how the red corpuscles had been washed out of him. It was Lush's policy and inclination to gratify everybody when he had no reason to the contrary; and the baronet always treated him well, as one of those easy-handled personages who, frequenting the society of gentlemen, without being exactly gentlemen themselves, can be the more serviceable, like the second-best articles of our wardrobe, which we use with a comfortable freedom from anxiety.

"Well, you will let me know the turn of events," said Sir Hugo, "if this marriage seems likely to come off after all, or if anything else happens to make the want of money more pressing. My plan would be much better for him than burthening Ryelands."

"That's true," said Lush, "only it must not be urged on him—just placed in his way that the scent may tickle him. Grandcourt is not a man to be always led by what makes for his own

interest; especially if you let him see that it makes for your interest too. I'm attached to him, of course. I've given up everything else for the sake of keeping by him, and it has lasted a good fifteen years now. He would not easily get any one else to fill my place. He's a peculiar character, is Henleigh Grandcourt, and it has been growing on him of late years. However, I'm of a constant disposition, and I've been a sort of guardian to him since he was twenty: an uncommonly fascinating fellow he was then, to be sure—and could be now, if he liked. I'm attached to him; and it would be a good deal worse for him if he missed me at his elbow."

Sir Hugo did not think it needful to express his sympathy or even assent, and perhaps Lush himself did not expect this sketch of his motives to be taken as exact. But how can a man avoid himself as a subject in conversation? And he must make some sort of decent toilet in words, as in cloth and linen. Lush's listener was not severe: a member of Parliament could allow for the necessities of verbal toilet; and the dialogue went on without any change of mutual estimate.

However, Lush's easy prospect of indefinite procrastination was cut off the next morning by Grandcourt's saluting him with the question—

"Are you making all the arrangements for our starting by the Paris train?"

"I didn't know you meant to start," said Lush, not exactly taken by surprise.

"You might have known," said Grandcourt, looking at the burnt length of his cigar, and speaking in that lowered tone which was usual with him when he meant to express disgust and be peremptory. "Just see to everything, will you? and mind no brute gets into the same carriage with us. And leave my P.P.C. at the Mallingers."

In consequence they were at Paris the next day; but here Lush was gratified by the proposal or command that he should go straight on to Diplow and see that everything was right, while Grandcourt and the valet remained behind; and it was not until several days later that Lush received the telegram ordering the carriage to the Wancester station.

He had used the interim actively, not only in carrying out Grandcourt's orders about the stud and household, but in learning all he could of Gwendolen, and how things were going on at Offendene. What was the probable effect that the news of the family misfortunes would have on Grandcourt's fitful obstinacy he felt to be quite incalculable. So far as the girl's poverty might

be an argument that she would accept an offer from him now in spite of any previous coyness, it might remove that bitter objection to risk a repulse which Lush divined to be one of Grandcourt's deterring motives; on the other hand, the certainty of acceptance was just "the sort of thing" to make him lapse hither and thither with no more apparent will than a moth. Lush had had his patron under close observation for many years, and knew him perhaps better than he knew any other subject; but to know Grandcourt was to doubt what he would do in any particular case. It might happen that he would behave with an apparent magnanimity, like the hero of a modern French drama, whose sudden start into moral splendour after much lying and meanness, leaves you little confidence as to any part of his career that may follow the fall of the curtain. Indeed, what attitude would have been more honourable for a final scene than that of declining to seek an heiress for her money, and determining to marry the attractive girl who had none? But Lush had some general certainties about Grandcourt, and one was, that of all inward movements those of generosity were the least likely to occur in him. Of what use, however, is a general certainty that an insect will not walk with his head hindmost,

when what you need to know is the play of inward stimulus that sends him hither and thither in a network of possible paths? Thus Lush was much at fault as to the probable issue between Grandcourt and Gwendolen, when what he desired was a perfect confidence that they would never be married. He would have consented willingly that Grandcourt should marry an heiress, or that he should marry Mrs Glasher: in the one match there would have been the immediate abundance that prospective heirship could not supply, in the other there would have been the security of the wife's gratitude, for Lush had always been Mrs Glasher's friend; and that the future Mrs Grandcourt should not be socially received could not affect his private comfort. He would not have minded, either, that there should be no marriage in question at all; but he felt himself justified in doing his utmost to hinder a marriage with a girl who was likely to bring nothing but trouble to her husband — not to speak of annoyance if not ultimate injury to her husband's old companion, whose future Mr Lush earnestly wished to make as easy as possible, considering that he had well deserved such compensation for leading a dog's life, though that of a dog who enjoyed many tastes undisturbed, and who

profited by a large establishment. He wished for himself what he felt to be good, and was not conscious of wishing harm to any one else; unless perhaps it were just now a little harm to the inconvenient and impertinent Gwendolen. But the easiest-humoured amateur of luxury and music, the toad-eater the least liable to nausea, must be expected to have his susceptibilities. And Mr Lush was accustomed to be treated by the world in general as an apt, agreeable fellow: he had not made up his mind to be insulted by more than one person.

With this imperfect preparation of a war policy, Lush was awaiting Grandcourt's arrival, doing little more than wondering how the campaign would begin. The first day Grandcourt was much occupied with the stables, and amongst other things he ordered a groom to put a side-saddle on Criterion and let him review the horse's paces. This marked indication of purpose set Lush on considering over again whether he should incur the ticklish consequences of speaking first, while he was still sure that no compromising step had been taken; and he rose the next morning almost resolved that if Grandcourt seemed in as good a humour as yesterday and entered at all into talk, he would let drop the interesting facts

about Gwendolen and her family, just to see how they would work, and to get some guidance. But Grandcourt did not enter into talk, and in answer to a question even about his own convenience, no fish could have maintained a more unwinking silence. After he had read his letters he gave various orders to be executed or transmitted by Lush, and then thrust his shoulders towards that useful person, who accordingly rose to leave the room. But before he was out of the door, Grandcourt turned his head slightly and gave a broken languid "Oh."

"What is it?" said Lush, who, it must have been observed, did not take his dusty puddings with a respectful air.

"Shut the door, will you? I can't speak into the corridor."

Lush closed the door, came forward, and chose to sit down.

After a little pause Grandcourt said, "Is Miss Harleth at Offendene?" He was quite certain that Lush had made it his business to inquire about her, and he had some pleasure in thinking that Lush did not want *him* to inquire.

"Well, I hardly know," said Lush, carelessly. "The family's utterly done up. They and the Gascoignes too have lost all their money. It's

owing to some rascally banking business. The poor mother hasn't a *sou*, it seems. She and the girls have to huddle themselves into a little cottage like a labourer's."

"Don't lie to me, if you please," said Grandcourt, in his lowest audible tone. "It's not amusing, and it answers no other purpose."

"What do you mean?" said Lush, more nettled than was common with him—the prospect before him being more than commonly disturbing.

"Just tell me the truth, will you?"

"It's no invention of mine. I have heard the story from several—Bazley, Brackenshaw's man, for one. He is getting a new tenant for Offendene."

"I don't mean that. Is Miss Harleth there, or is she not?" said Grandcourt, in his former tone.

"Upon my soul, I can't tell," said Lush, rather sulkily. "She may have left yesterday. I heard she had taken a situation as governess; she may be gone to it for what I know. But if you wanted to see her, no doubt the mother would send for her back." This sneer slipped off his tongue without strict intention.

"Send Hutchins to inquire whether she will be there to-morrow."

Lush did not move. Like many persons who have thought over beforehand what they shall say

in given cases, he was impelled by an unexpected irritation to say some of those prearranged things before the cases were given. Grandcourt, in fact, was likely to get into a scrape so tremendous, that it was impossible to let him take the first step towards it without remonstrance. Lush retained enough caution to use a tone of rational friendliness; still he felt his own value to his patron, and was prepared to be daring.

"It would be as well for you to remember, Grandcourt, that you are coming under closer fire now. There can be none of the ordinary flirting done, which may mean everything or nothing. You must make up your mind whether you wish to be accepted; and more than that, how you would like being refused. Either one or the other. You can't be philandering after her again for six weeks."

Grandcourt said nothing, but pressed the newspaper down on his knees and began to light another cigar. Lush took this as a sign that he was willing to listen, and was the more bent on using the opportunity; he wanted if possible to find out which would be the more potent cause of hesitation—probable acceptance or probable refusal.

"Everything has a more serious look now than it had before. There is her family to be provided

for. You could not let your wife's mother live in beggary. It will be a confoundedly hampering affair. Marriage will pin you down in a way you haven't been used to; and in point of money you have not too much elbow-room. And after all, what will you get by it? You are master over your estates, present or future, as far as choosing your heir goes; it's a pity to go on encumbering them for a mere whim, which you may repent of in a twelvemonth. I should be sorry to see you making a mess of your life in that way. If there were anything solid to be gained by the marriage, that would be a different affair."

Lush's tone had gradually become more and more unctuous in its friendliness of remonstrance, and he was almost in danger of forgetting that he was merely gambling in argument. When he left off, Grandcourt took his cigar out of his mouth, and looking steadily at the moist end while he adjusted the leaf with his delicate finger-tips, said,

"I knew before that you had an objection to my marrying Miss Harleth." Here he made a little pause, before he continued, "But I never considered that a reason against it."

"I never supposed you did," answered Lush, not unctuously, but drily. "It was not *that* I urged as a reason. I should have thought it

might have been a reason against it, after all your experience, that you would be acting like the hero of a ballad, and making yourself absurd—and all for what? You know you couldn't make up your mind before. It's impossible you can care much about her. And as for the tricks she is likely to play, you may judge of that from what you heard at Leubronn. However, what I wished to point out to you was, that there can be no shilly-shally now."

"Perfectly," said Grandcourt, looking round at Lush and fixing him with narrow eyes; "I don't intend that there should be. I daresay it's disagreeable to you. But if you suppose I care a damn for that, you are most stupendously mistaken."

"Oh, well," said Lush, rising with his hands in his pockets, and feeling some latent venom still within him, "if you have made up your mind!—only there's another aspect of the affair. I have been speaking on the supposition that it was absolutely certain she would accept you, and that destitution would have no choice. But I am not so sure that the young lady is to be counted on. She is kittle cattle to shoe, I think. And she had her reasons for running away before." Lush had moved a step or two till he stood nearly in front

of Grandcourt, though at some distance from him. He did not feel himself much restrained by consequences, being aware that the only strong hold he had on his present position was his serviceableness; and even after a quarrel, the want of him was likely sooner or later to recur. He foresaw that Gwendolen would cause him to be ousted for a time, and his temper at this moment urged him to risk a quarrel.

"She had her reasons," he repeated, more significantly.

"I had come to that conclusion before," said Grandcourt, with contemptuous irony.

"Yes, but I hardly think you know what her reasons were."

"You do, apparently," said Grandcourt, not betraying by so much as an eyelash that he cared for the reasons.

"Yes, and you had better know too, that you may judge of the influence you have over her, if she swallows her reasons and accepts you. For my own part, I would take odds against it. She saw Lydia in Cardell Chase and heard the whole story."

Grandcourt made no immediate answer, and only went on smoking. He was so long before he spoke, that Lush moved about and looked out

of the windows, unwilling to go away without seeing some effect of his daring move. He had expected that Grandcourt would tax him with having contrived the affair, since Mrs Glasher was then living at Gadsmere a hundred miles off, and he was prepared to admit the fact: what he cared about was that Grandcourt should be staggered by the sense that his intended advances must be made to a girl who had that knowledge in her mind and had been scared by it. At length Grandcourt, seeing Lush turn towards him, looked at him again and said, contemptuously, "What follows?"

Here certainly was a "mate" in answer to Lush's "check;" and though his exasperation with Grandcourt was perhaps stronger than it had ever been before, it would have been mere idiocy to act as if any further move could be useful. He gave a slight shrug with one shoulder and was going to walk away, when Grandcourt, turning on his seat towards the table, said, as quietly as if nothing had occurred, "Oblige me by pushing that pen and paper here, will you?"

No thunderous, bullying superior could have exercised the imperious spell that Grandcourt did. Why, instead of being obeyed, he had never been told to go to a warmer place, was perhaps a

mystery to several who found themselves obeying him. The pen and paper were pushed to him, and as he took them he said, "Just wait for this letter."

He scrawled with ease, and the brief note was quickly addressed. "Let Hutchins go with it at once, will you?" said Grandcourt, pushing the letter away from him.

As Lush had expected, it was addressed to Miss Harleth, Offendene. When his irritation had cooled down he was glad there had been no explosive quarrel; but he felt sure that there was a notch made against him, and that somehow or other he was intended to pay. It was also clear to him that the immediate effect of his revelation had been to harden Grandcourt's previous determination. But as to the particular movements which made this process in his baffling mind, Lush could only toss up his chin in despair of a theory.

CHAPTER XXVI.

He brings white asses laden with the freight
Of Tyrian vessels, purple, gold, and balm;
To bribe my will: I'll bid them chase him forth,
Nor let him breathe the taint of his surmise
On my secure resolve.
Ay, 'tis secure;
And therefore let him come to spread his freight.
For firmness hath its appetite and craves
The stronger lure, more strongly to resist;
Would know the touch of gold to fling it off;
Scent wine to feel its lip the soberer;
Behold soft byssus, ivory, and plumes
To say, "They're fair, but I will none of them,"
And flout Enticement in the very face.

MR GASCOIGNE one day came to Offendene with what he felt to be the satisfactory news that Mrs Mompert had fixed Tuesday in the following week for her interview with Gwendolen at Wancester. He said nothing of his having incidentally heard that Mr Grandcourt had returned to Diplow; knowing no more than she did that Leubronn had been the goal of her admirer's journeying, and feeling that it would be unkind

uselessly to revive the memory of a brilliant prospect under the present reverses. In his secret soul he thought of his niece's unintelligible caprice with regret, but he vindicated her to himself by considering that Grandcourt had been the first to behave oddly, in suddenly walking away when there had been the best opportunity for crowning his marked attentions. The Rector's practical judgment told him that his chief duty to his niece now was to encourage her resolutely to face the change in her lot, since there was no manifest promise of any event that would avert it.

"You will find an interest in varied experience, my dear, and I have no doubt you will be a more valuable woman for having sustained such a part as you are called to."

"I cannot pretend to believe that I shall like it," said Gwendolen, for the first time showing her uncle some petulance. "But I am quite aware that I am obliged to bear it."

She remembered having submitted to his admonition on a different occasion, when she was expected to like a very different prospect.

"And your good sense will teach you to behave suitably under it," said Mr Gascoigne, with a shade more gravity. "I feel sure that Mrs Mompert will be pleased with you. You will know

how to conduct yourself to a woman who holds in all senses the relation of superior to you. This trouble has come on you young, but that makes it in some respects easier, and there is benefit in all chastisement if we adjust our minds to it."

This was precisely what Gwendolen was unable to do; and after her uncle was gone, the bitter tears, which had rarely come during the late trouble, rose and fell slowly as she sat alone. Her heart denied that the trouble was easier because she was young. When was she to have any happiness, if it did not come while she was young? Not that her visions of possible happiness for herself were as unmixed with necessary evil as they used to be—not that she could still imagine herself plucking the fruits of life without suspicion of their core. But this general disenchantment with the world—nay, with herself, since it appeared that she was not made for easy pre-eminence—only intensified her sense of forlornness: it was a visibly sterile distance enclosing the dreary path at her feet, in which she had no courage to tread. She was in that first crisis of passionate youthful rebellion against what is not fitly called pain, but rather the absence of joy—that first rage of disappointment in life's morning, which we whom the years have subdued are apt to remember but dimly

as part of our own experience, and so to be intolerant of its self-enclosed unreasonableness and impiety. What passion seems more absurd, when we have got outside it and looked at calamity as a collective risk, than this amazed anguish that I and not Thou, He, or She, should be just the smitten one? Yet perhaps some who have afterwards made themselves a willing fence before the breast of another, and have carried their own heart-wound in heroic silence—some who have made their latter deeds great, nevertheless began with this angry amazement at their own smart, and on the mere denial of their fantastic desires raged as if under the sting of wasps which reduced the universe for them to an unjust infliction of pain. This was nearly poor Gwendolen's condition. What though such a reverse as hers had often happened to other girls? The one point she had been all her life learning to care for was, that it had happened to *her:* it was what *she* felt under Klesmer's demonstration that she was not remarkable enough to command fortune by force of will and merit; it was what *she* would feel under the rigours of Mrs Mompert's constant expectation, under the dull demand that she should be cheerful with three Miss Momperts, under the necessity of showing herself entirely submissive,

and keeping her thoughts to herself. To be a queen disthroned is not so hard as some other down-stepping: imagine one who had been made to believe in his own divinity finding all homage withdrawn, and himself unable to perform a miracle that would recall the homage and restore his own confidence. Something akin to this illusion and this helplessness had befallen the poor spoiled child, with the lovely lips and eyes and the majestic figure—which seemed now to have no magic in them.

She rose from the low ottoman where she had been sitting purposeless, and walked up and down the drawing-room, resting her elbow on one palm while she leaned down her cheek on the other, and a slow tear fell. She thought, "I have always, ever since I was little, felt that mamma was not a happy woman; and now I daresay I shall be more unhappy than she has been." Her mind dwelt for a few moments on the picture of herself losing her youth and ceasing to enjoy—not minding whether she did this or that: but such picturing inevitably brought back the image of her mother. "Poor mamma! it will be still worse for her now. I can get a little money for her—that is all I shall care about now." And then with an entirely new movement of her imagina-

tion, she saw her mother getting quite old and white, and herself no longer young but faded, and their two faces meeting still with memory and love, and she knowing what was in her mother's mind—"Poor Gwen too is sad and faded now"—and then for the first time she sobbed, not in anger but with a sort of tender misery.

Her face was towards the door and she saw her mother enter. She barely saw that; for her eyes were large with tears, and she pressed her handkerchief against them hurriedly. Before she took it away she felt her mother's arms round her, and this sensation, which seemed a prolongation of her inward vision, overcame her will to be reticent: she sobbed anew in spite of herself, as they pressed their cheeks together.

Mrs Davilow had brought something in her hand which had already caused her an agitating anxiety, and she dared not speak until her darling had become calmer. But Gwendolen, with whom weeping had always been a painful manifestation to be resisted if possible, again pressed her handkerchief against her eyes, and with a deep breath drew her head backward and looked at her mother, who was pale and tremulous.

"It was nothing, mamma," said Gwendolen, thinking that her mother had been moved in this

way simply by finding her in distress. "It is all over now."

But Mrs Davilow had withdrawn her arms, and Gwendolen perceived a letter in her hand.

"What is that letter?—worse news still?" she asked, with a touch of bitterness.

"I don't know what you will think it, dear," said Mrs Davilow, keeping the letter in her hand. "You will hardly guess where it comes from."

"Don't ask me to guess anything," said Gwendolen, rather impatiently, as if a bruise were being pressed.

"It is addressed to you, dear."

Gwendolen gave the slightest perceptible toss of the head.

"It comes from Diplow," said Mrs Davilow, giving her the letter.

She knew Grandcourt's indistinct handwriting, and her mother was not surprised to see her blush deeply; but watching her as she read, and wondering much what was the purport of the letter, she saw the colour die out. Gwendolen's lips even were pale as she turned the open note towards her mother. The words were few and formal.

"Mr Grandcourt presents his compliments to Miss Harleth, and begs to know whether he may

be permitted to call at Offendene to-morrow after two, and to see her alone. Mr Grandcourt has just returned from Leubronn, where he had hoped to find Miss Harleth."

Mrs Davilow read, and then looked at her daughter inquiringly, leaving the note in her hand. Gwendolen let it fall on the floor, and turned away.

"It must be answered, darling," said Mrs Davilow, timidly. "The man waits."

Gwendolen sank on the settee, clasped her hands, and looked straight before her, not at her mother. She had the expression of one who had been startled by a sound and was listening to know what would come of it. The sudden change of the situation was bewildering. A few minutes before she was looking along an inescapable path of repulsive monotony, with hopeless inward rebellion against the imperious lot which left her no choice: and lo, now, a moment of choice was come. Yet—was it triumph she felt most or terror? Impossible for Gwendolen not to feel some triumph in a tribute to her power at a time when she was first tasting the bitterness of insignificance: again she seemed to be getting a sort of empire over her own life. But how to use it?

Here came the terror. Quick, quick, like pictures in a book beaten open with a sense of hurry, came back vividly, yet in fragments, all that she had gone through in relation to Grandcourt—the allurements, the vacillations, the resolve to accede, the final repulsion; the incisive face of that dark-eyed lady with the lovely boy; her own pledge (was it a pledge not to marry him?)—the new disbelief in the worth of men and things for which that scene of disclosure had become a symbol. That unalterable experience made a vision at which in the first agitated moment, before tempering reflections could suggest themselves, her native terror shrank.

Where was the good of choice coming again? What did she wish? Anything different? No! and yet in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself—"I wish I had never known it!" Something, anything she wished for that would have saved her from the dread to let Grandcourt come.

It was no long while—yet it seemed long to Mrs Davilow, before she thought it well to say, gently—

"It will be necessary for you to write, dear. Or shall I write an answer for you—which you will dictate?"

"No, mamma," said Gwendolen, drawing a deep breath. "But please lay me out the pen and paper."

That was gaining time. Was she to decline Grandcourt's visit—close the shutters—not even look out on what would happen?—though with the assurance that she should remain just where she was? The young activity within her made a warm current through her terror and stirred towards something that would be an event—towards an opportunity in which she could look and speak with the former effectiveness. The interest of the morrow was no longer at a dead-lock.

"There is really no reason on earth why you should be so alarmed at the man's waiting a few minutes, mamma," said Gwendolen, remonstrantly, as Mrs Davilow, having prepared the writing materials, looked towards her expectantly. "Servants expect nothing else than to wait. It is not to be supposed that I must write on the instant."

"No, dear," said Mrs Davilow, in the tone of one corrected, turning to sit down and take up a bit of work that lay at hand; "he can wait another quarter of an hour, if you like."

It was very simple speech and action on her part, but it was what might have been subtly calculated. Gwendolen felt a contradictory desire

to be hastened: hurry would save her from deliberate choice.

"I did not mean him to wait long enough for that needlework to be finished," she said, lifting her hands to stroke the backward curves of her hair, while she rose from her seat and stood still.

"But if you don't feel able to decide?" said Mrs Davilow, sympathisingly.

"I *must* decide," said Gwendolen, walking to the writing-table and seating herself. All the while there was a busy undercurrent in her, like the thought of a man who keeps up a dialogue while he is considering how he can slip away. Why should she not let him come? It bound her to nothing. He had been to Leubronn after her: of course he meant a direct unmistakable renewal of the suit which before had been only implied. What then? She could reject him. Why was she to deny herself the freedom of doing this —which she would like to do?

"If Mr Grandcourt has only just returned from Leubronn," said Mrs Davilow, observing that Gwendolen leaned back in her chair after taking the pen in her hand—"I wonder whether he has heard of our misfortunes."

"That could make no difference to a man in his position," said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously.

"It would, to some men," said Mrs Davilow. "They would not like to take a wife from a family in a state of beggary almost, as we are. Here we are at Offendene with a great shell over us as usual. But just imagine his finding us at Sawyer's Cottage. Most men are afraid of being bored or taxed by a wife's family. If Mr Grandcourt did know, I think it a strong proof of his attachment to you."

Mrs Davilow spoke with unusual emphasis: it was the first time she had ventured to say anything about Grandcourt which would necessarily seem intended as an argument in favour of him, her habitual impression being that such arguments would certainly be useless and might be worse. The effect of her words now was stronger than she could imagine: they raised a new set of possibilities in Gwendolen's mind—a vision of what Grandcourt might do for her mother if she, Gwendolen, did—what she was not going to do. She was so moved by a new rush of ideas, that like one conscious of being urgently called away, she felt that the immediate task must be hastened: the letter must be written, else it might be endlessly deferred. After all, she acted in a hurry as she had wished to do. To act in a hurry was to have a reason for keeping away from an absolute

decision, and to leave open as many issues as possible.

She wrote: "Miss Harleth presents her compliments to Mr Grandcourt. She will be at home after two o'clock to-morrow."

Before addressing the note she said, "Pray ring the bell, mamma, if there is any one to answer it." She really did not know who did the work of the house.

It was not till after the letter had been taken away and Gwendolen had risen again, stretching out one arm and then resting it on her head, with a long moan which had a sound of relief in it, that Mrs Davilow ventured to ask—

"What did you say, Gwen?"

"I said that I should be at home," answered Gwendolen, rather loftily. Then, after a pause, "You must not expect, because Mr Grandcourt is coming, that anything is going to happen, mamma."

"I don't allow myself to expect anything, dear. I desire you to follow your own feeling. You have never told me what that was."

"What is the use of telling?" said Gwendolen, hearing a reproach in that true statement. "When I have anything pleasant to tell, you may be sure I will tell you."

"But Mr Grandcourt will consider that you have already accepted him, in allowing him to come. His note tells you plainly enough that he is coming to make you an offer."

"Very well; and I wish to have the pleasure of refusing him."

Mrs Davilow looked up in wonderment, but Gwendolen implied her wish not to be questioned further by saying—

"Put down that detestable needlework, and let us walk in the avenue. I am stifled."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Desire has trimmed the sails, and Circumstance
Brings but the breeze to fill them.

WHILE Grandcourt on his beautiful black Yarico, the groom behind him on Criterion, was taking the pleasant ride from Diplow to Offendene, Gwendolen was seated before the mirror while her mother gathered up the lengthy mass of light-brown hair which she had been carefully brushing.

"Only gather it up easily and make a coil, mamma," said Gwendolen.

"Let me bring you some earrings, Gwen," said Mrs Davilow, when the hair was adjusted, and they were both looking at the reflection in the glass. It was impossible for them not to notice that the eyes looked brighter than they had done of late, that there seemed to be a shadow lifted from the face, leaving all the lines once more in their placid youthfulness. The mother drew some inferences

that made her voice rather cheerful. "You do want your earrings?"

"No, mamma; I shall not wear any ornaments, and I shall put on my black silk. Black is the only wear when one is going to refuse an offer," said Gwendolen, with one of her old smiles at her mother, while she rose to throw off her dressing-gown.

"Suppose the offer is not made after all," said Mrs Davilow, not without a sly intention.

"Then that will be because I refuse it beforehand," said Gwendolen. "It comes to the same thing."

There was a proud little toss of her head as she said this; and when she walked down-stairs in her long black robes, there was just that firm poise of head and elasticity of form which had lately been missing, as in a parched plant. Her mother thought, "She is quite herself again. It must be pleasure in his coming. Can her mind be really made up against him?"

Gwendolen would have been rather angry if that thought had been uttered; perhaps all the more because through the last twenty hours, with a brief interruption of sleep, she had been so occupied with perpetually alternating images and arguments for and against the possibility of her marry-

ing Grandcourt, that the conclusion which she had determined on beforehand ceased to have any hold on her consciousness: the alternate dip of counterbalancing thoughts begotten of counterbalancing desires had brought her into a state in which no conclusion could look fixed to her. She would have expressed her resolve as before; but it was a form out of which the blood had been sucked—no more a part of quivering life than the "God's will be done" of one who is eagerly watching chances. She did not mean to accept Grandcourt; from the first moment of receiving his letter she had meant to refuse him; still, that could not but prompt her to look the unwelcome reasons full in the face until she had a little less awe of them, could not hinder her imagination from filling out her knowledge in various ways, some of which seemed to change the aspect of what she knew. By dint of looking at a dubious object with a constructive imagination, one can give it twenty different shapes. Her indistinct grounds of hesitation before the interview at the Whispering Stones, at present counted for nothing; they were all merged in the final repulsion. If it had not been for that day in Cardell Chase, she said to herself now, there would have been no obstacle to her marrying Grandcourt. On that day and after it,

she had not reasoned and balanced: she had acted with a force of impulse against which all questioning was no more than a voice against a torrent. The impulse had come—not only from her maidenly pride and jealousy, not only from the shock of another woman's calamity thrust close on her vision, but—from her dread of wrong-doing, which was vague, it is true, and aloof from the daily details of her life, but not the less strong. Whatever was accepted as consistent with being a lady she had no scruple about; but from the dim region of what was called disgraceful, wrong, guilty, she shrank with mingled pride and terror; and even apart from shame, her feeling would have made her place any deliberate injury of another in the region of guilt.

But now—did she know exactly what was the state of the case with regard to Mrs Glasher and her children? She had given a sort of promise—had said, "I will not interfere with your wishes." But would another woman who married Grandcourt be in fact the decisive obstacle to her wishes, or be doing her and her boy any real injury? Might it not be just as well, nay better, that Grandcourt should marry? For what could not a woman do when she was married, if she knew how to assert herself? Here all was constructive imagination.

Gwendolen had about as accurate a conception of marriage—that is to say, of the mutual influences, demands, duties of man and woman in the state of matrimony—as she had of magnetic currents and the law of storms.

"Mamma managed badly," was her way of summing up what she had seen of her mother's experience: she herself would manage quite differently. And the trials of matrimony were the last theme into which Mrs Davilow could choose to enter fully with this daughter.

"I wonder what mamma and my uncle would say if they knew about Mrs Glasher!" thought Gwendolen, in her inward debating; not that she could imagine herself telling them, even if she had not felt bound to silence. "I wonder what anybody would say; or what they would say to Mr Grandcourt's marrying some one else and having other children!" To consider what "anybody" would say, was to be released from the difficulty of judging where everything was obscure to her when feeling had ceased to be decisive. She had only to collect her memories, which proved to her that "anybody" regarded illegitimate children as more rightfully to be looked shy on and deprived of social advantages than illegitimate fathers. The verdict of "anybody" seemed to be that she had

no reason to concern herself greatly on behalf of Mrs Glasher and her children.

But there was another way in which they had caused her concern. What others might think, could not do away with a feeling which in the first instance would hardly be too strongly described as indignation and loathing that she should have been expected to unite herself with an outworn life, full of backward secrets which must have been more keenly felt than any associations with *her*. True, the question of love on her own part had occupied her scarcely at all in relation to Grandcourt. The desirability of marriage for her had always seemed due to other feelings than love; and to be enamoured was the part of the man, on whom the advances depended. Gwendolen had found no objection to Grandcourt's way of being enamoured before she had had that glimpse of his past, which she resented as if it had been a deliberate offence against her. His advances to *her* were deliberate, and she felt a retrospective disgust for them. Perhaps other men's lives were of the same kind—full of secrets which made the ignorant suppositions of the woman they wanted to marry a farce at which they were laughing in their sleeves.

These feelings of disgust and indignation had

sunk deep; and though other troublous experience in the last weeks had dulled them from passion into remembrance, it was chiefly their reverberating activity which kept her firm to the understanding with herself, that she was not going to accept Grandcourt. She had never meant to form a new determination; she had only been considering what might be thought or said. If anything could have induced her to change, it would have been the prospect of making all things easy for "poor mamma:" that, she admitted, was a temptation. But no! she was going to refuse him. Meanwhile, the thought that he was coming to be refused was inspiriting: she had the white reins in her hands again; there was a new current in her frame, reviving her from the beaten-down consciousness in which she had been left by the interview with Klesmer. She was not now going to crave an opinion of her capabilities; she was going to exercise her power.

Was this what made her heart palpitate annoyingly when she heard the horse's footsteps on the gravel?—when Miss Merry, who opened the door to Grandcourt, came to tell her that he was in the drawing-room? The hours of preparation and the triumph of the situation were apparently of no use: she might as well have seen Grandcourt coming

suddenly on her in the midst of her despondency. While walking into the drawing-room she had to concentrate all her energy in that self-control which made her appear gravely gracious as she gave her hand to him, and answered his hope that she was quite well in a voice as low and languid as his own. A moment afterwards, when they were both of them seated on two of the wreath-painted chairs—Gwendolen upright with downcast eyelids, Grandcourt about two yards distant, leaning one arm over the back of his chair and looking at her, while he held his hat in his left hand — any one seeing them as a picture would have concluded that they were in some stage of love-making suspense. And certainly the love-making had begun: she already felt herself being wooed by this silent man seated at an agreeable distance, with the subtlest atmosphere of atta of roses and an attention bent wholly on her. And he also considered himself to be wooing: he was not a man to suppose that his presence carried no consequences; and he was exactly the man to feel the utmost piquancy in a girl whom he had not found quite calculable.

"I was disappointed not to find you at Leubronn," he began, his usual broken drawl having just a shade of amorous languor in it. "The

place was intolerable without you. A mere kennel of a place. Don't you think so?"

"I can't judge what it would be without myself," said Gwendolen, turning her eyes on him, with some recovered sense of mischief. "*With* myself I liked it well enough to have stayed longer, if I could. But I was obliged to come home on account of family troubles."

"It was very cruel of you to go to Leubronn," said Grandcourt, taking no notice of the troubles, on which Gwendolen—she hardly knew why—wished that there should be a clear understanding at once. "You must have known that it would spoil everything: you knew you were the heart and soul of everything that went on. Are you quite reckless about me?"

It was impossible to say "yes" in a tone that would be taken seriously; equally impossible to say "no"; but what else could she say? In her difficulty, she turned down her eyelids again and blushed over face and neck. Grandcourt saw her in a new phase, and believed that she was showing her inclination. But he was determined that she should show it more decidedly.

"Perhaps there is some deeper interest? Some attraction—some engagement—which it would

have been only fair to make me aware of? Is there any man who stands between us?"

Inwardly the answer framed itself, "No; but there is a woman." Yet how could she utter this? Even if she had not promised that woman to be silent, it would have been impossible for her to enter on the subject with Grandcourt. But how could she arrest this wooing by beginning to make a formal speech—"I perceive your intention—it is most flattering, &c." A fish honestly invited to come and be eaten has a clear course in declining, but how if it finds itself swimming against a net? And apart from the network, would she have dared at once to say anything decisive? Gwendolen had not time to be clear on that point. As it was, she felt compelled to silence, and after a pause, Grandcourt said—

"Am I to understand that some one else is preferred?"

Gwendolen, now impatient of her own embarrassment, determined to rush at the difficulty and free herself. She raised her eyes again and said with something of her former clearness and defiance, "No"—wishing him to understand, "What then? I may not be ready to take *you*." There was nothing that Grandcourt could not

understand which he perceived likely to affect his *amour propre.*

"The last thing I would do, is to importune you. I should not hope to win you by making myself a bore. If there were no hope for me, I would ask you to tell me so at once, that I might just ride away to—no matter where."

Almost to her own astonishment, Gwendolen felt a sudden alarm at the image of Grandcourt finally riding away. What would be left her then? Nothing but the former dreariness. She liked him to be there. She snatched at the subject that would defer any decisive answer.

"I fear you are not aware of what has happened to us. I have lately had to think so much of my mamma's troubles, that other subjects have been quite thrown into the background. She has lost all her fortune, and we are going to leave this place. I must ask you to excuse my seeming preoccupied."

In eluding a direct appeal Gwendolen recovered some of her self-possession. She spoke with dignity and looked straight at Grandcourt, whose long, narrow, inpenetrable eyes met hers, and mysteriously arrested them: mysteriously; for the subtly-varied drama between man and woman is often such as can hardly be rendered in words put together like dominoes, according to obvious fixed

marks. The word of all work Love will no more express the myriad modes of mutual attraction, than the word Thought can inform you what is passing through your neighbour's mind. It would be hard to tell on which side—Gwendolen's or Grandcourt's—the influence was more mixed. At that moment his strongest wish was to be completely master of this creature—this piquant combination of maidenliness and mischief: that she knew things which had made her start away from him, spurred him to triumph over that repugnance; and he was believing that he should triumph. And she—ah, piteous equality in the need to dominate!—she was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn towards the seeming water in the desert, overcome by the suffused sense that here in this man's homage to her lay the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot.

All the while they were looking at each other; and Grandcourt said, slowly and languidly, as if it were of no importance, other things having been settled—

"You will tell me now, I hope, that Mrs Davilow's loss of fortune will not trouble you further. You will trust to me to prevent it from weighing upon her. You will give me the claim to provide against that."

The little pauses and refined drawlings with which this speech was uttered, gave time for Gwendolen to go through the dream of a life. As the words penetrated her, they had the effect of a draught of wine, which suddenly makes all things easier, desirable things not so wrong, and people in general less disagreeable. She had a momentary phantasmal love for this man who chose his words so well, and who was a mere incarnation of delicate homage. Repugnance, dread, scruples—these were dim as remembered pains, while she was already tasting relief under the immediate pain of hopelessness. She imagined herself already springing to her mother, and being playful again. Yet when Grandcourt had ceased to speak, there was an instant in which she was conscious of being at the turning of the ways.

"You are very generous," she said, not moving her eyes, and speaking with a gentle intonation.

"You accept what will make such things a matter of course?" said Grandcourt, without any new eagerness. "You consent to become my wife?"

This time Gwendolen remained quite pale. Something made her rise from her seat in spite of herself, and walk to a little distance. Then she turned and with her hands folded before her stood in silence.

Grandcourt immediately rose too, resting his hat on the chair, but still keeping hold of it. The evident hesitation of this destitute girl to take his splendid offer stung him into a keenness of interest such as he had not known for years. None the less because he attributed her hesitation entirely to her knowledge about Mrs Glasher. In that attitude of preparation, he said—

"Do you command me to go?" No familiar spirit could have suggested to him more effective words.

"No," said Gwendolen. She could not let him go: that negative was a clutch. She seemed to herself to be, after all, only drifted towards the tremendous decision:—but drifting depends on something besides the currents, when the sails have been set beforehand.

"You accept my devotion?" said Grandcourt, holding his hat by his side and looking straight into her eyes, without other movement. Their eyes meeting in that way seemed to allow any length of pause; but wait as long as she would, how could she contradict herself? What had she detained him for? He had shut out any explanation.

"Yes," came as gravely from Gwendolen's lips as if she had been answering to her name in a

court of justice. He received it gravely, and they still looked at each other in the same attitude. Was there ever before such a way of accepting the bliss-giving "Yes"? Grandcourt liked better to be at that distance from her, and to feel under a ceremony imposed by an indefinable prohibition that breathed from Gwendolen's bearing.

But he did at length lay down his hat and advance to take her hand, just pressing his lips upon it and letting it go again. She thought his behaviour perfect, and gained a sense of freedom which made her almost ready to be mischievous. Her "Yes" entailed so little at this moment, that there was nothing to screen the reversal of her gloomy prospects: her vision was filled by her own release from the Momperts, and her mother's release from Sawyer's Cottage. With a happy curl of the lips, she said—

"Will you not see mamma? I will fetch her."

"Let us wait a little," said Grandcourt, in his favourite attitude, having his left forefinger and thumb in his waistcoat-pocket, and with his right caressing his whisker, while he stood near Gwendolen and looked at her—not unlike a gentleman who has a felicitous introduction at an evening party.

"Have you anything else to say to me?" said Gwendolen, playfully.

"Yes.—I know having things said to you is a great bore," said Grandcourt, rather sympathetically.

"Not when they are things I like to hear."

"Will it bother you to be asked how soon we can be married?"

"I think it will, to-day," said Gwendolen, putting up her chin saucily.

"Not to-day, then. But to-morrow. Think of it before I come to-morrow. In a fortnight—or three weeks—as soon as possible."

"Ah, you think you will be tired of my company," said Gwendolen. "I notice when people are married the husband is not so much with his wife as when they were engaged. But perhaps I shall like that better too."

She laughed charmingly.

"You shall have whatever you like," said Grandcourt.

"And nothing that I don't like?—please say that; because I think I dislike what I don't like more than I like what I like," said Gwendolen, finding herself in the woman's paradise where all her nonsense is adorable.

Grandcourt paused: these were subtilties in

which he had much experience of his own. "I don't know—this is such a brute of a world, things are always turning up that one doesn't like. I can't always hinder your being bored. If you like to hunt Criterion, I can't hinder his coming down by some chance or other."

"Ah, my friend Criterion, how is he?"

"He is outside: I made the groom ride him, that you might see him. He had the side-saddle on for an hour or two yesterday. Come to the window and look at him."

They could see the two horses being taken slowly round the sweep, and the beautiful creatures, in their fine grooming, sent a thrill of exultation through Gwendolen. They were the symbols of command and luxury, in delightful contrast with the ugliness of poverty and humiliation at which she had lately been looking close.

"Will you ride Criterion to-morrow?" said Grandcourt. "If you will, everything shall be arranged."

"I should like it of all things," said Gwendolen. "I want to lose myself in a gallop again. But now I must go and fetch mamma."

"Take my arm to the door, then," said Grandcourt, and she accepted. Their faces were very near each other, being almost on a level, and he

was looking at her. She thought his manners as a lover more agreeable than any she had seen described. She had no alarm lest he meant to kiss her, and was so much at her ease, that she suddenly paused in the middle of the room and said, half-archly, half-earnestly—

"Oh, while I think of it—there is something I dislike that you can save me from. I do *not* like Mr Lush's company."

"You shall not have it. I'll get rid of him."

"You are not fond of him yourself?"

"Not in the least. I let him hang on me because he has always been a poor devil," said Grandcourt, in an *adagio* of utter indifference. "They got him to travel with me when I was a lad. He was always that coarse-haired kind of brute—a sort of cross between a hog and a *dilettante*."

Gwendolen laughed. All that seemed kind and natural enough: Grandcourt's fastidiousness enhanced the kindness. And when they reached the door, his way of opening it for her was the perfection of easy homage. Really, she thought, he was likely to be the least disagreeable of husbands.

Mrs Davilow was waiting anxiously in her bedroom when Gwendolen entered, stepped towards

her quickly, and kissing her on both cheeks said in a low tone, "Come down, mamma, and see Mr Grandcourt. I am engaged to him."

"My darling child!" said Mrs Davilow, with a surprise that was rather solemn than glad.

"Yes," said Gwendolen, in the same tone, and with a quickness which implied that it was needless to ask questions. "Everything is settled. You are not going to Sawyer's Cottage, I am not going to be inspected by Mrs Mompert, and everything is to be as I like. So come down with me immediately."

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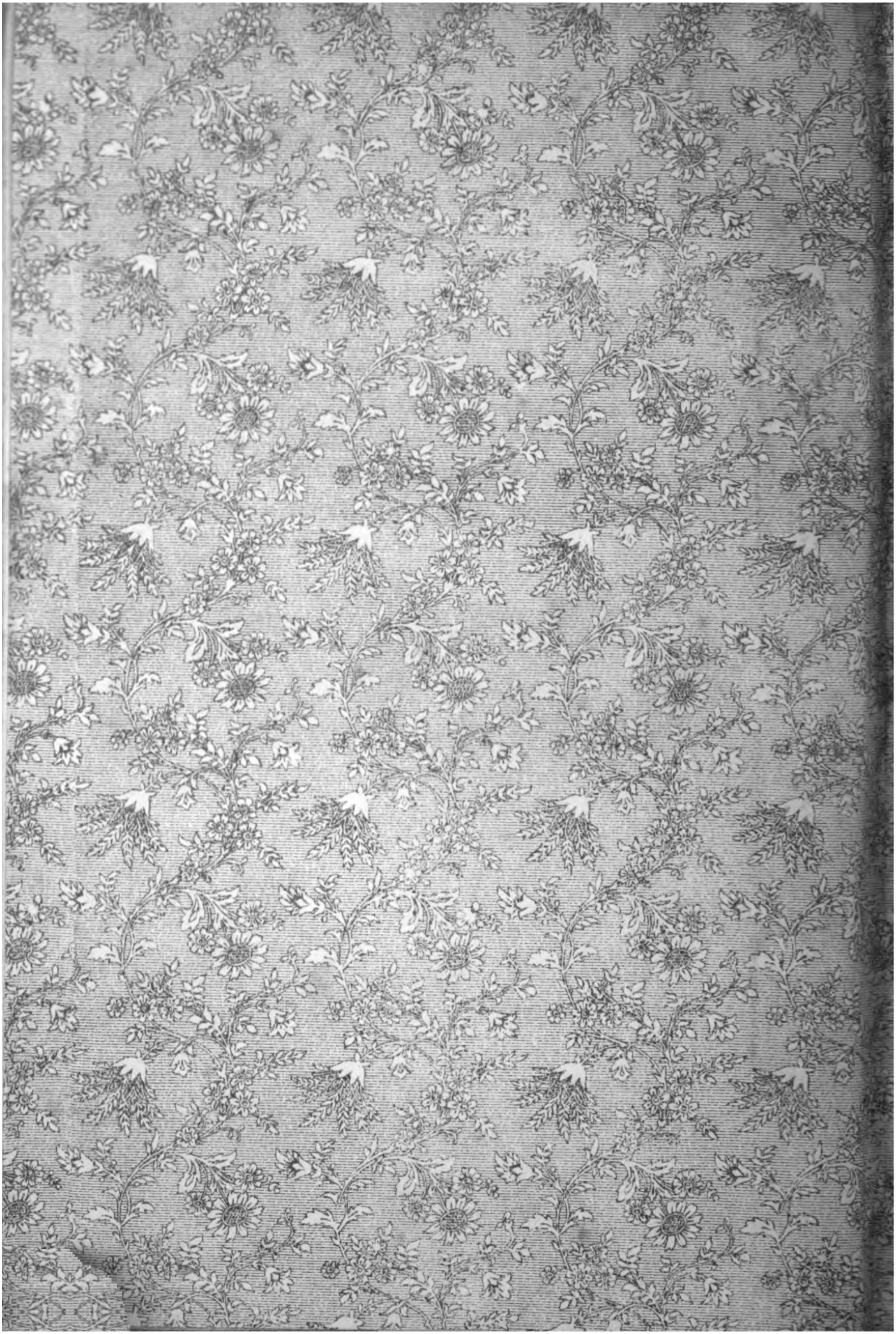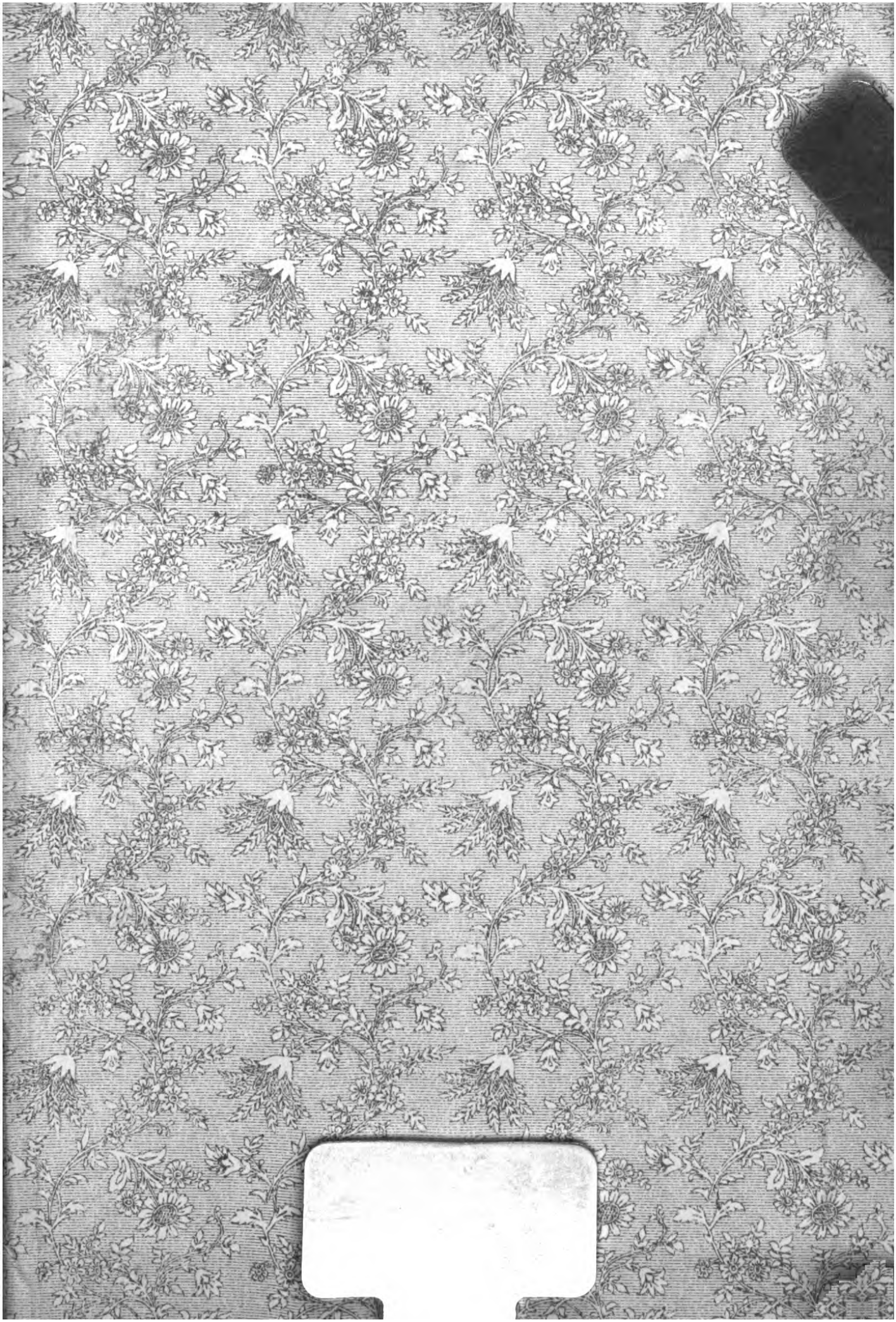
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